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No.9
July 1986
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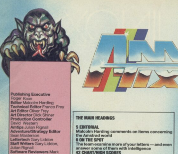
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ISSUE 9 JULY 1986

THE MAIN HEADINGS

AMTIX! COMPETITIONS

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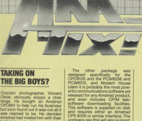
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A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
Cover by Oliver Frey

The next issue of AMTIX! goes on sale from 17 July


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TAKING ON THE BIG BOYS?

Croydon photographer, Vincent Oliver, obviously enjoys a challenge. He bought an Amstrad CPC664 to help run his business but soon found out it was not all it was claimed to be. He decided Amstrad had misled him with their technical advertising and he decided he was going to do something about it.

He wrote direct to Alan Sugar asking for his money back. Back came a reply from one of Sugar's minions telling him first of all to contact a software company which had a range of CP/M titles compatible for the 664. Investigation showed this was not the case so he wrote back again and was next advised to contact the retailer from whom he purchased the micro. He stuck to his guns and after further correspondence was given a credit note for the full cost of the CPC664 which was enough to buy a PCW 8256. Well done sir!

A FAT JOYCE FOR £20!

It's not often that mention is made in the editorial of any specific article in the magazine. However there are always exceptions to the rule and it is felt some space must be given to an exclusive article in this month's AMTECH section. The article gives an easy to understand, step by step guide, enabling any owner of a PCW 8256 machine to beef it up to the status of an 8512 without the extra disk drive and the cost is just £20! That is £180 less than the price being asked by Alan Sugar albeit his price includes a second disk drive.

MONOPOLY FEARS UNFOUNDED?

A letter, in our May Lettertech section, has prompted Modem House to write to AMTIX! In it director, K Rose says readers have no reason to fear a monopoly on Amstrad CPC6128 communications packages or indeed on any other Amstrad micro. It adds Modem House supply two entirely different packages for the 6128. The first was designed by David Husband for the CPC464 machine but supports the entire CPC range and was released in July last year. It consists of a complete pack including interface and communications software on ROM. Mr Rose adds this package will support anyone's Magic Modem quite happily, including Auto-Dial as standard.

The other package was designed specifically for the CPC6128 and the PCW8256 and PCW8512, and Modem House claim it is probably the most powerful communications software yet released for any Amstrad product, and even includes CP/M telesoftware downloading facilities. This software is supplied on disk and requires either an Amstrad CPS 8256 or similar interface. The company say this will also support the Magic Modem quite happily, with full auto-dial, auto-logon and auto-answer facilities.

Modem House sell both packs for £75 retail excluding VAT.

Mr Rose also takes us to task on an article about the Magic Modem in the May issue. It appears Datastar Systems are not the manufacturer of the Magic Modem. Indeed the aforementioned is the forerunner of Modem House's Voyager 7 and Datastar Systems act only as distributors.

ELECTRONIC MAIL INSECURE CLAIM

As computer enthusiasts become more and more proficient with their machines it appears users of electronic mail services are looking for ways to stop people 'hacking' their way into confidential files and services.

The threat from hackers was highlighted recently when two men appeared in court and were found guilty of breaking into the Duke of Edinburgh's electronic mailbox. They were convicted of forgery in illegally accessing the Duke's Telecom Gold mailbox after coming across a list of users and their electronic passwords when testing new computer equipment.

Users of services like Telecom Gold are becoming ever more concerned about the apparent ease with which hackers can gain access to confidential files. The problem, apparently, with this type of system is that subscribers don't physically hold their messages. Every user has his own mailbox and password protection but the boxes are held centrally on large mainframe computers—accessed via the public telephone system—and when hackers break into that no-one is safe.

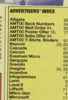
Telex, on the other hand, is carried in its own separate network and is much more like postal delivery in that messages go directly to the subscriber's address.

One company cashing in on the use of telex is Data and Control Equipment which sells a TeleBox telex adaptor to computer users. It is possible to link all the micros in an office to the TeleBox unit enabling everyone to send and receive telexes quickly and simply.

A CONFUSED STATE

It would appear certain members of the editorial staff were in a confused state when they wrote the review of the Comet game for the final sentence credited it to Rainbird instead of Firebird! The confusion over the two names also occurred in the news section where it appeared Tony Rainbird had joined Firebird. The heading should have stated 'Rainbird set to ignite the adventure world'. Sorry!

SOFTWARE REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE



ADVERTISERS' INDEX







Well here we go again . . . another batch of informed, literate, humorous and impartial comments upon the state of the Amstrad nation and that's just the replies! Some of the letters are above average too!

As always, a reminder to address your letters to the correct department of the magazine. Technical letters should be sent to AMTECH and letters of a more light hearted manner should be sent to On the Spot.

Right, let's cut out the banter and get down to business. We lead with another brilliant piece of prose which wins our Letter of the Month prize. A voucher for £20 of software will soon be winging its way to the sender.

THREE CHEERS FOR AMSTRAD

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Dear AMTIX!
I am writing in response to the letter written by P Long in the April issue of AMTIX!

I bought myself a CPC464 with colour monitor and it took me 20 months to pay for it and at the moment I am saving up to buy a disk drive. It will take a while to save enough but I will get there. The choice to buy a green screen version was Mr Long's so he should not go blaming everyone else. As for software prices there are plenty of bargains for those willing to shop around. The last place to expect a bargain is at a large High Street shop.

His complaint about the disk only software is quite ridiculous as there is such a small amount about at present. There is more tape software on the market than one person could ever hope to buy. Finally I do wish Amstrad owners would stop slagging off Amstrad. There are enough critics waiting for Amstrad to flop without trying to help ourselves. Amsoft are guilty of producing some of the worst software on the market but things are getting better. It is time people realised that Amstrad are in computers to make a profit, not for the goodness of their heart. It's a fact of life that to be successful you must look to the future. Unfortunately this means you will always have to upset somebody. You only have to look at the price of the CPC6128 compared to the price of £330 I paid for the CPC464 and I did not get any free software!

If it was not for Alan Sugar we would not have such good computers. Without their business outlook Amstrad would go the same way as some other computer manufacturers. I know for I have previously owned a Dragon and an Oric.

Mr Long appears to have a king size microchip on his shoulder. I should like to point out that I have been unemployed for two years. I also have a wife and three children so I know what it is like. Life is what you make of it so stop moaning.

AL Myers, Cwmbran, Gwent

Are you sure you are unemployed Mr Myers? We think Alan Sugar could do worse than employ you as his public relations man. You certainly sing the praises of Amstrad. You are correct in your statement that the majority of games available for the Amstrad are on cassette but there is a growing trend to issue them on disk too.
OTS

ANALYSIS OF AMTIX

Dear AMTIX!
This could turn out to be quite a long letter, so instead of printing it on my rather expensive A4 paper I'm going to use ordinary microperf. One of the main reasons for my putting print head to paper, is that I have recently noticed that of the four magazines which I take every month, (one a week keeps the men in white coats away), 3 of them are now published by Database Publications. You can tell!!!! The ACU and YC have both changed their formats in line with the other mag, CWTA. Nice pretty coloured boxes surround virtually everything. The blurb by the editor(s), the ads, everything has that sickening sychophantic style about it. Yours is the only one of the four which is different. Of course, there may be a bit too much difference at times.

I'm sorry to say that I find Oliver Frey's rather OTT artwork a bit too much for an eye which out-grew such grotesquerie several years ago, but apart from that your mag has grown from being an experimental purchase to being my favourite regular order. From the moment I saw it on the newsagent's shelf, I thought that I might be getting more than I at first thought. Issue 1 was good. Issue 2 was better. Issue 3 was superb. You seem to improve drastically with every issue so keep up the good work.

Some of the letters you receive give me cause to wonder whether or not I am one of life's fortunate folk rather than one of it's misfits. This is particularly true with regard to the (in) famous DMP2000 printer. Although this saga began in the summer of 1985, when I was burgled and both my CPC464 and an electronic keyboard were kidnapped, (I was desolate), and I finally got my CPC6128 as a replacement from the insurance, (I was overjoyed), my real crisis happened when I received said 6128. Firstly, although the machine arrived within 3 weeks of being ordered, (I was ecstatic), the monitor was broken and had to be sent back, (I was horrified), only 2 weeks before Christmas. While it was away, (I was lonely), my DMP2000 arrived, (I was cheered up), 2 days after I sent the monitor back, but I could not, of course, connect it up.

My monitor was up and running again within 7 days . . . (I was ecstatic again), but, of course, the printer wasn't, (I was furious again). Over Christmas I could do nothing, but after the holiday was over I sent the printer back, (I felt lonely again). Amstrad said, (I rang to check), it would be returned within 7 days, (I was overjoyed again), 3 weeks later, (I was furious —nobody seemed to know where it was) it was eventually returned in full working order, (I was zapped), and this letter is printed on it using Tasword 6128. At least I have one, (I am truly grateful), and the ribbon is now almost 4 months old and still wearing well. I am a teacher, and produced, (before I got a job), numerous CVs, job application letters and various begging letters to the bank, electricity board, gas board and especially BT.. Since starting work I have written at least four, 2000-2500 word lesson plans per day, (except Saturdays and Sundays), numerous work sheets and a wide variety of miscellaneous odds and ends.

I am totally inept at any kind of 'fiddly' work and have not made the slightest attempt to re-ink any pads. Beat that anyone???

I have enclosed a number of competition entries, I hope the lack of postcard, (rice question), won't hinder my winning. Once again, keep up the good work. Don't sell-out to Database Pubs, and for God's sake do keep up the Terminal Man cartoon series. I find it immensely enjoyable, in spite of being a little gruesomely drawn at times.

MJ Lyons, Withington, Manchester

Wow! Such praise is hard to live with. We certainly intend to keep up the good work and our independence!
OTS

IDEAS FOR MASCOTS

Dear AMTIX!
In reply to your plea for suggestions for a mascot, I have come up with a few ideas: 1 Sweevo (*Sweevo's World*), 2 Magic Knight (*Finders Keepers & Spellbound*) 3 Gerald (*Spindizzy*) or even . . . 4 A hobbit (*Lord of the Rings — Hobbit*).

I am sure Oli Frey would have fun doing these at the bottom of the pages, and I would certainly enjoy reading them. So please, please, please choose a mascot (as long as it isn't Roland; there isn't a decent Roland game out), so that ZZAP!'s Rockford and Thingy have a rival on their hands. Why not make it a competition? If so my entry is with this letter.

Could Robin Candy please explain what went wrong with the *Finders Keepers* tips in issue 3, page 52? When I read them I thought they didn't have a thing to do with

this neat little budget game, this was confirmed when Tony O'Brian (the same person who sent the *FK* tips) sent tips for *Dynamite Dan* (issue 5, page 74) word for word as the *Finders Keepers* tips!!! Was this a printing mistake? If so please print the PROPER *FK* tips. OR has Tony O'Brian gone off his Rocker? Please explain. Even so you still make a mega-brillipoos (your word not mine) mag. I shall look forward to seeing our own AMTIX mascot running riot or even 2.
KL Leong, Coppull, Lancashire

We are still considering a suitable mascot for AMTIX! Perhaps readers should send in votes and decide for us. It's probably a bit late in the day to print tips for *FK* this issue but we shall ask Mr Rignall about Mr Candy's tips on your behalf.
OTS

WHERE IS MY GAME?

Dear Sirs
In the March issue of AMTIX! magazine you were kind enough to announce that I had won a copy of the game *Battle of Britain*. However to date I have not received either the said prize or the courtesy of a reply to my previous enquiry. Assuming you are not Sinclair Research in disguise, I should be pleased to hear from you shortly.
A Slate, Waddon Way, Croydon

Oh dear sorry about the delay but we are assured your name and address has been forwarded to PSS. Let's hope this letter jogs their memory.
OTS

COMPUTER MAD GRANNIES

Dear Amtix!
Regarding your readership survey, it may surprise you to know that some of your regular purchasers of AMTIX! magazine do not fall into the category of 12 - 25 year old male 'alien zappers'. I'm not sure about the 'jog suit', but I would have loved the opportunity to win an AMTIX! Sweatshirt or T-shirt; and a 12 month sub to the mag would be most welcome, but, alas, the questions in your 'Amtixionnaire' scarcely seem geared to a lady who freely admits to having passed the half-century mark.

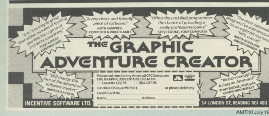
Whilst appreciating that your publication is aimed principally at the games' player, perhaps next time you could re-word the queries to include a wider readership (which I'm sure you must attract from the multitude of Amstrad owners around) whose interests extend beyond games to graphic utilities, word processors, light pens, mice, printers, modems etc.

Meanwhile, I have filled in your form (with appropriate remarks where a straightforward answer is inapplicable) in the hope that you may find it amusing, even if I am not a suitable entrant for your competition.

I would be very interested to know if you've got any other computer-mad grannies out there.

Jill Lawson, Romford, Essex

How nice to know we have at least one computer mad granny fan out there! So you don't drink Lilt or Coke — who cares? And alien zapping is merely a state of mind! No doubt if there are others they will write and let us know. Thanks for filling in the form and feel free to enter as many of our competitions as you wish.
OTS



GETTING TO GRIPS WITH ELITE

Dear Amtix!
Like many others, I purchased *Elite* as soon as it was released and duly discovered the dreaded 'lock-up' bug. Although this hindered progress by the need to reload the game every now and then, my status gradually climbed to the ranks of the Elite at the end of March. Deciding to catch-up on a month's loss of sleep, I sent the game off to Firebird for an unbugged copy. Five days later I received the new version and promptly loaded-up the game for an evening of uninterrupted gratuitous violence with the Thargoids.

The new copy loaded flawlessly and I set about loading-in my status from the previous version — 'Tape Loading Error'. I tried again, same result. Alright, I can take a joke Firebird! Who is the jerk that amended the original program and made me Harmless again?

Well, if I can do it once, I can do it again. After three evenings of zapping and crashing I have managed to become Dangerous again. This status was NOT achieved by following the advice of Kurt Farmer that you printed in AMTIPS! It's going to take inexperienced Elitists light years of play if they follow these so-called tips. I'm not surprised Kurt has an 'iron ass' if he has followed his own advice - he is suffering this condition from sitting in front of his monitor for too long! Apart from his 'advice' I question whether he has played the Amstrad version of *Elite* at all — where did he find the 'Constrictor' special mission?

I have enclosed my own set of playing tips for the Amstrad version of *Elite* and assure you that they were found the hard way — not by playing on a BBC! (or was it the C64 Kurt?)

Changing the subject, I would also like to dispute the review of *Ring Of Darkness* in the May issue. I assume that Sean has been working too hard or partaking of a little too much of the hard stuff.

I bought *Ring Of Darkness* over a year ago for £9.95 and thought my money well spent. As part of a four game package it is amazing value for money. The game is not a graphic masterpiece admittedly, but if the reviewer had bothered to investigate any of the dungeons, pits and hollows he would have found the real gameplay. There are miles of dungeon-maze to be explored, with many levels and different obstacles to be overcome before you eventually become 'Ring Bearer'.

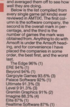
By today's standard, the game is a little primitive in some parts and is definitely not *Swords and Sorcery*! However, many people will find this game very entertaining and compulsive playing. If Sean would like a status tape to allow him to get further into the plot I can supply one.

Finally, as a green-screen user can I appeal for some sort of inclusion of a games performance in mono by your reviewers? Come to think of it, perhaps that's why I enjoyed *Ring Of Darkness* — I was not blinded by the glare!
Paul Kelly, Lindsey Dell, Birmingham
PS I would not be insulted by some remuneration for all this free copy lads. OK. OK. I'll just go and **** myself now shall I?

Thanks for the tips on *Elite* Paul. They have been passed on to Mr Rignall. As for your comments about Ring of Darkness over to you Sean!

Hmm, well . . . I'm afraid my opinion remains unchanged. I agree there's a lot in the game but feel that too little care was taken in the implementation. I'm afraid we must agree to differ on this one. Now go and **** yourself!
OTS

SOFTWARE COMPANY RATINGS



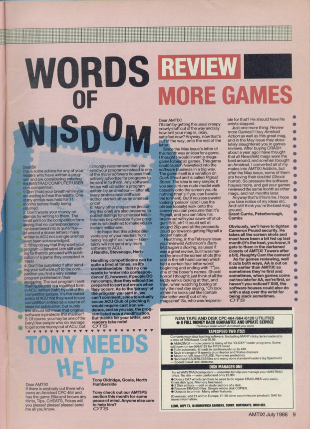
Dear Amtix!
Well done, on an excellent, and a very professional magazine. Right from issue zero, I have always admired AMTIX! and whenever the time came to buy software, I have always given your reviews a good, thorough read through before making up my mind which game to buy. In fact I have put so much trust in them that I thought it would be interesting how you rate software companies, from your results, so I have compiled a full list of the marks you have given them, and averaged them off to see how well they are doing.

Below is the list compiled from every single game (all kinds) ever reviewed in AMTIX!. The first column is the software company, the second is the overall mark in percentage, and the third is the number of games the mark was obtained from. Anything to do with Amsoft is under the Amsoft heading, and for convenience I have placed the companies in some order, the best first, and the worst last.

The Edge 96% (1)
ERE 94% (1)
Beyond 94% (1)
Gargoyle Games 93.6% (3)
Palace Software 92% (1)
Ultimate 91.3% (3)
Level 9 91.3% (3)
Gremlin Graphics 91% (2)
Imagine 88.3% (4)
Elite 87% (1)
Realtime Software 87% (1)
Romantic Robot 87% (1)
Martech 85% (1)
Audiogenic 85% (1)
Tooba Zaida (Author) 85% (1)
Viper 84% (1)
Mikro Gen 83.5% (4)
Incentive 82.5% (4)
Taskset 82% (1)
Virgin 81.75% (4)
Global Software 81% (2)
Design Design 79.2% (5)
Llamasoft 79% (1)
Digital Integration 79% (1)
Psion 79% (1)
Melbourne House 78.29% (7)
8th Day 78% (3)
Quicksilva 78% (1)
Orpheus 78% (1)
Hewson Consultants 77.5% (4)
Activision 76.6% (5)
DK'Tronics 76% (1); Durell 75.5% (2)
PSS 75.5% (4)
Ariolasoft 74.3% (3)
Ocean 73% (8)
Mirrorsoft 72.8% (5)
US Gold 72.25% (4)
Vidipix 72% (1)
Mastertronic 71.9% (7)
Bubble Bus 71% (3)
A&F Software 69% (1)
Microbyte 69% (1)
Blaby 68% (2)
Adventure International 68% (3)
Firebird Software 67.75% (8)
Vortex 66% (3)
Alligata Software 66% (4)
Software Projects 65.5% (2)
Gilsoft 65% (1)
CRL 61% (7)
Micropower 59% (1)
Domark 58.5% (2)
Rhinosoft 58% (1)
Addictive Games 55.5% (2)
Electric Dreams 54.5% (2)
Artic 53.75% (4)
Kuma 52.3% (3)
Probe Software 52% (1)
Anirog 51% (9)
Britannia 49% (1)
Amsoft 48.84% (68!)
CCS 48.5% (2)
Budgie 47% (1)
Myriddin 44% (2)
Lothlorien 39.6% (3)
Insight 32% (1)
Blue Ribbon 27% (4)
Interceptor Micros 21% (1)
Atlantis 13% (1)
Dorcas 6% (1).

Well, there you have it, all the companies, in order. Actually, I missed out one, Infocom, the reason for this being that they weren't rated as such, they were all 'accolades in another league'. You have to give a pat on the back for all those eight companies above 90%, especially Gargoyle, Ultimate and Level 9, for producing quantity, as well as quality. Nearer the bottom of the list you might notice that it is more the case of not much quality, but lots of quantity, and as for poor old Amsoft, 68 Games, Cor!!
William G Nuttall, Fox Hill, London

What a very wonderful list, William. One wonders what people did with their spare time before computers, computer games and (above all) computer magazines came along. After all, compiling lists of TV programmes must have been really boring. Wonder what the software companies will have to say about it?
OTS



WORDS OF WISDOM

Dear Sir
I have some advice for any of your readers who have written a program and are considering entering the AMSTRAD COMPUTER USER club competition.

1: Don't hold your breath while you are waiting to hear the results. One of my entries was held for 11 months before finally being returned.

2: Don't waste your money on stamps by writing to them. The small print on the competition form saying that no correspondence can be entered into is quite true — of around a dozen letters I have written to ACU not a single one has even been acknowledged.

3: If they do say that they want your program — beware! I am still waiting for them to proceed with publication of a game they accepted in 1984!

4: Don't be surprised if after sending your software off to the competition you find a very similar program published in their magazine. The last program I sent them appeared in a modified form in ACU, written (hah!) by one of the competition judges. It is the stated policy of ACU that they want to use competition entries as a source of ideas for publication, but surely this should not mean that original software is pirated in this manner?

5: Of course, you may be one of the (very) few people who do manage to get some money out of ACU, but I strongly recommend that you send your programs instead to one of the many software houses that actively advertise for programs to be sent in to them. Any software house will consider a program written by an amateur — after all, every professional software author started off as an amateur once!

6: Many other magazines (including this one!) are also prepared to publish listings for a modest fee — this may be preferable if your program is not destined to make you an instant millionaire.

I do hope that this advice prevents any of your readers from being 'caught' as I was — I certainly will not send any more software to ACU.
J Randle, Stevenage, Herts

Handling competitioons can be quite a bind at times, so it's understandable that no one wants to 'enter into correspondence' (!), however, if people DO run comps, then they sdhould be prepared to sort out errors when they occurr. As to the 'piracy' of the program you sent in, we can't comment, since to actually accue ACU Club of pinching it would require cast iron evidence, and as you say, the program listed was a modification. But thanks for your letter, and readers take note!
OTS

TONY NEEDS HELP

Dear AMTIX!
If there is anybody out there who owns an Amstrad CPC 464 and has the game *Elite* and knows any Hints, Tips, CHEATS, Pokes will you please! please! please! send me all you know.
Tony Oldridge, Goole, North Humberside

Tony check out our AMTIPS section this month for some peace of mind. Anyone else care to help him?
OTS

REVIEW MORE GAMES

Dear AMTIX!
I'll start by getting the usual creepy crawly stuff out of the way and say how brill your mag is, okay, satisfied now? Anyway, now that's out of the way, onto the rest of the letter.

Since the May issue's letter of the month was an idea for a game, I thought I would invent a mega-game to beat all games. This game could launch Newsfield into the software business in a big way. The game itself is a variation on *Duck Shoot* and is called *Rignall Shoot*. The idea is very simple; if you see a hi-res nude model walk casually onto the screen you do nothing (that's if you can handle the torment). But if you see a weird looking 'person' (and I use the phrase loosely) walk onto the screen you can presume that it's Rignall, and you can blow his brains out with your sawn-off shotgun! Brill, eh? It could sell at around 20p and all the proceeds could go towards getting Rignall a decent haircut!

Next thing, in the February issue you reviewed Activision's *Barry McGuigan's Boxing*, as usual it was a great review, but it was marred by one of the screen shots (the one in the left hand corner) which had a certain four letter word(beginning and ending with 'T')as one of the boxer's names. Shock! horror! I thought: just think of all the kiddy winks looking at that, and then, when watching boxing on telly the next day saying, 'Oh look at him he looks just like (certain four letter word) out of my magazine!' So, who was responsible for that? He should have his wrists slapped.

Just one more thing: Review more Games!! I buy *Amstrad Action* as well as this great mag, and in the May issue they absolutely slaughtered you in games reviews. After buying CRASH about a year ago I have thought that all Newsfield mags were the best around, and so when I bought an Amstrad, I converted all of my mates into AMTIX! Addicts, but after the May issue, some of them are having their doubts! (Shock horror). So pressure the software houses more, and get your games reviewed the same month as other mags, and not months later.

Anyway that's it from me, I hope you take notice of my ideas etc. And I still think you're the best mag around.
Grant Currie, Peterborough, Cambs

Obviously, we'll have to tighten Cameron Pound security. He takes all the screen shots and must have been a bit fed up last month (it's the heat, you know, it gets to them in the darkened closets of AMTIX! Towers after a bit). Naughty Cam the camera!

As for games reviewing, well it cuts both ways, AA is out on sale earlier than AMTIX! so sometimes they're first and sometimes, when games come out too late for AA, we're first, or haven't you noticed? Still, the software houses could also do with a slap over the wrist for being slack sometimes.
OTS

NEW TAPE AND DISK CPC 464/664/6128 UTILITIES
● A FULL MONEY BACK GUARANTEE AND UPDATE SERVICE
1(always state which Amstrad you own)

TAPESPEED TWO (TS2)

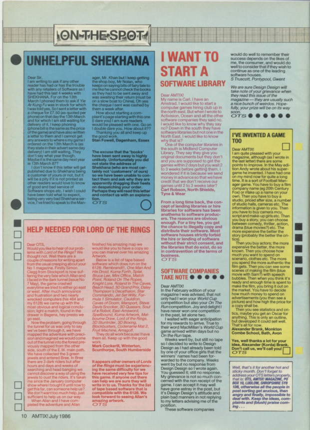
Converts your slow loading software, (including MANY clicky/jerky leaders) to a max of 3600 baud. Cost £6.99.
● AMAZING! — now converts many of the 'CLICKY' leader programs. Some will now run on 664/6128 for FIRST time!
● Fully automatic. It loads in continuously up to 44K.
● Save at range of 9 speeds plus Header and Status displays
● Motor on/off. Insert PAUSE. Removes protection.
● Handles HEADERLESS files and many none standard loaders (eg Spectrum)
— Speed (baud rate) detector.

DISK MANAGER ONE

For all AMSTRAD computers — essential to help you manage your AMSTRAD drive. No risk — very useful and only £5.99!
● Does a CAT which can then be used to do repeat ERASURES very easily. Gives disk type. Memory free/used.
● 2 Disk editors — edit or study sectors of a disk.
● Recover ERASED files. Simple whole disk COPIER.
● Outputs to printer. Many other features.

(Overseas: add £1 within Europe, £1.50 other countries per product). SAE for more information.

LERM, DEPT TX, 10 BRUNSWICK GARDENS, CORBY, NORTHANTS, NN18 9ER.



UNHELPFUL SHEKHANA

Dear Sir,
I am writing to ask if any other reader has had or has the trouble with any retailers of Software as I have had this last 4 weeks with SHEKHANA. For on the 13th March I phoned them to ask if *Yie Ar Kung Fu* was in stock for which I was told yes, So I sent a letter with a cheque for £7.50 (as quoted per phone) on that day the 13th March and for which I am still waiting for delivery of it, I keep phoning (phone bill is the same as the price of the game) and have also written a letter to them and I cannot get any answers to where s my game I ordered on the 13th March is (as they state in their advert same day delivery) I am still waiting. They don't say what year though, Maybe it is the same day next year ie 13th March 87?

I don't know if this letter will get published due to Shekhana being a customer of yours or not, but it will be a pity if it is not printed as other readers would love to know of good and bad service of Software shops etc. I wish I could have been told what to expect, being very very bad Shekhana service, I've tried to speak to the Manager, Mr. Khan but I keep getting the shop boy, Mr Nolan, who keeps on saying bits of fairy tale to me like he cannot check the books as they had to be sent away and was awaiting their return (must be on a slow boat to China), Oh yes the cheque I sent was cashed by them a week after.

How about starting a complaint's page starting with this one (I dare you) I am sure readers would be pleased with one. Go on I double dare you. How about it??

Thanking you all and keep up the good work.

Stan Fowell, Dagenham, Essex

The excuse that the 'books' have been sent away is highly unlikely. Unfortunately you did not state the address of Shekhana (who are most certainly not 'customers' of ours) so we have been unable to contact them and ask why they are apparently dragging their heels on despatching your order. Perhaps they will read this letter and contact us with an explanation.

OTS

HELP NEEDED FOR LORD OF THE RINGS

Dear OTS,
Would you like to hear of our problems with *Lord of the Rings*? We thought not. Well there are a couple of reasons for writing apart from the usual creeping about your No 1 magazine. Firstly Simon Clegg from Stockport is now suffering the very fate which Allan and I faced in the dark tunnel (issue No 7 May), the game crashed everytime we tried to either go east or west. After much annoyance and frustration and two nearly wrecked computers (his 464 and my 6128) we came up with the most obvious and logical conclusion; light a match, found in the drawer in Bagena, hey presto we go east.

Now the problem, going through the tunnel for us was only to say we've been through it, we have mapped the adventure with precision and imagined we would come out of the tunnel into the forest previously mapped from the other side, south of the E.W. main path. We have collected the 3 green jewels and entered Bree. In Bree there are 3 dark riders but after hours and days and weeks of searching and head banging we cannot discover a way of using the jewels to oust the riders. It's taken me since the January computer show where I bought it until now to get this far, can someone help us? We don't want too much help, just sufficient to help us on our way.

When Allan and I have completed the adventure and Allan finished his amazing map we would like you to have a copy so you can marvel over his amazing Artwork.

Below is a list of tape based software which does run on the 6128: *Rembrandt1*, *One Man And His Droid*, *Kuma Forth*, *Splat*, *Bruce Lee*, *Mini Office*, *Match Point*, *Roland On The Ropes*, *Knight Lore*, *Roland In The Caves*, *Beach Head*, *3D Grand Prix*, *Daley Thompson's Decathalon*, *Star Commando*, *Jet Set Willy*, *Formula 1 Simulator*, *Cauldron*, *Caves of Doom*, *Marsport*, *Steve Davis Snooker*, *3D Quasars*, *Soul of a Robot*, *Easi-Amsword*, *Spellbound*, *Kuma Artwork*, *Melbourne Draw*, *Lord of the Rings*, *3D Stuntrider*, *3D Boxing*, *Blockbusters*, *Codename Mat 2*, *Fruit Machine*, *Amsgolf*.

They do all work because I have them all. Keep up with the good work.

Mark Cockerill, Winterton, Scunthorpe, South Humberside

It appears other owners of *Lords of the Rings* must be experiencing the same difficulty for we have received very few tips for this game. If anyone out there can help we are sure they will write in to us. Thanks for the list of tape based software that is compatible with the 6128. We look forward to seeing Allan's amazing artwork.

OTS

I WANT TO START A SOFTWARE LIBRARY

Dear AMTIX!
My name is Carl. I have an Amstrad. I would like to start a computer games hiring club up in the north east. But when I wrote to Activision, Ocean and all the other software companies they said no. I would like to know why they say no? Down in the south they have software libraries but not one in the North East. I would like to know why that is?

One of the computer libraries in the south is Midland Computer Library. They say they give you original documents but they don't and you are supposed to get the games within 2 days but you wait 2 to 3 weeks before getting them. I wondered if it is because we send money in advance so that we have credit that we don't receive our games until 2 to 3 weeks later?

Carl Robson, North Shields, Tyne & Wear

From a long time back, the concept of lending libraries or hire libraries for software has been anathema to software producers. The reasons are obvious enough. For a tiny fee, you get the chance to illegally copy and distribute their software. Most software houses strictly forbid the hire or lending of software without their strict consent, and the libraries that do exist, do so in contravention of the terms of business.

OTS

SOFTWARE COMPANIES TAKE NOTE

Dear AMTIX!
In the February edition of your magazine I was advised, that not only had I won your *World Cup* competition but also your *On The Run* competition. Joy and delight I have never won one competition in the past, let alone two.

I waited with eager anticipation for my rewards to arrive. True to their word MacMillan's *World Cup* game arrived within days but no *On the Run* tape.

Weeks went by, but still no tape so I decided to write to Design Design as I had already been told by one of your office girls that the winners' names had been forwarded to the company. Weeks went by but no response from Design Design so I wrote again. You guessed it; still no response. My grievance is not so much concerned with the non receipt of the game. I can accept it may well have gone astray in the post, but it's Design Design's attitude and plain bad manners in not replying to my letters advising me of the position.

These software companies would do well to remember their success depends on the likes of me, the consumer, and would do well to consider that if they wish to continue as one of the leading software houses.

S Truscott, Pontypool, Gwent

We are sure Design Design will take note of your grievance when they read this issue of the magazine — they are usually such a nice bunch of weirdos. Hopefully, your prize will be on its way soon.

OTS

I'VE INVENTED A GAME TOO

Dear AMTIX!
I am quite pleased with your magazine, although (as I wrote in the last letter) there are some points to improve. In the May edition Andy wrote about his supergame he invented. I have had one on my mind now for quite a long time. It is a sort of Football Manager game. You have to buy a film company name (eg 20th Century Fox) or make up a name on your own. Then you have to buy a studio, priced after size, a number of studio halls, cameras etc. The information is given to you. Then you have to buy camera mcu, script and make-up girls etc. Then you buy a story, you can choose between comedy, thriller, action, drama (blue movies?) etc. The more expensive the better the story (probably the better the critics).

Then you buy actors; the more expensive the better, the more known. Then you choose how much you want to spend on scenario, clothes etc. The more you spend the more authentic the film gets. Then you can see some scenes of making the film (blue movie with Sam?) with speech bubbles. Then when you think it's ready and enough time is spent to make the film, you bring it out on the market. You have to decide how much money to spend on advertisements (you then see a picture) and how high the price for a copy shall be.

Then you see statistics and critics, maybe you get an Oscar for anything. This is only an outline, but developed it could sell well. That's all for now.

Alexander Brank, Monkton Combe School, Bath, Avon

Yes, well thanks a lot for your idea, Alexander (Korda) Brank. Don't call us, we'll call you!

OTS

Well, that's it for another hot and sticky month. Don't forget to address your OTS letters properly, that is: ***OTS, AMTIX! MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB, otherwise all the people in post sorting get anxious, then angry and finally, impossible to deal with. Keep the ideas, complaints and (blush) praise coming . . .***


DO YOU WANT TO BE A HERO?
Biggles
The result of unique co-operation between three ace software developers and the Biggles film production company, Biggles – The Untold Story will knock you right out of the air! It's a multi-part arcade strategy game in which each part must be completed to reach your final goal.
In the air, on the rooftops, on the ground, or in the trenches
YOU CAN BE A HERO!
Coming in May
Commodore 64 £9.95 tape, £12.95 disk
Spectrum 48K £9.95 tape
Coming in June
Amstrad CPC £9.95 tape, £14.95 disk
MIRRORSOFT
Purnell Book Centre, Paulton, Bristol BS18 5LQ

STARQUAKE

Bubble Bus £8.95 cass, £12.95 disk, cass loading time 5 minutes

In the more distant corners of the galaxy, within which lie the darker reaches of space, very little attention is paid by Galactic property developers, entertainment barons or anyone at all looking for a good time — the result; very little to do and very few people with which to do it.

Being out in the sticks, galactically speaking, the nightlife is pretty poor and no one takes much notice of anything that goes on at all. And then, out of the blue the event horizon wakes up — a large black hole appears and suddenly the light show is out of this world. The black hole bends light towards it like a shadowy siren of the cosmos — wow look at that! A planet popping out of the darkness. Maybe things could liven up a little yet!

But the galaxy is about to get more than it bargained for because the newly arrived planet is actually not very well, in fact if the core isn't rebuilt pronto the whole planet will collapse in on itself and pop its mortal coil in a chain reaction that will take the entire universe with it! Who will aid the Universe in its direst hour? Blob that's who.

Blob? Blob indeed, Bio-Logically Operated Being.

Stephen Crow is the author of *Starquake*, which follows his earlier *Wizard's Lair*, and he's provided a comprehensive list of features found in the game but very little in terms of instructions, save for a few brief lines on the optional keyboard movement and user definable keys. Usefully, player defined keys are displayed on the main menu throughout various games along with the pre-defined keys.

Blob crashes onto the surface of the planet and with an initial five lives must collect pieces of the core in order to make it safe and thus save the galaxy. In order to accomplish his task Blob is given three attributes, represented by bars at the top of the screen, that must be used carefully. There's his energy represented by a battery, ammunition for his anti-nasty gun and finally his supply of bridging units uses to travel across or up thin air. They are laid in place by pushing up on the joystick or appropriate key. Very useful for getting across the planet's many chasms without falling in but temporary as they crumble to dust soon after use. These items can be replenished during the game by collecting specific objects.

Of course, poor old Blob can only hold so much power, ammunition or bridge bits at any one time, so it's a good idea to leave some things lying around for later use. Most of the action takes place underground within the labyrinthine complex of shafts and tunnels, below the surface of the planet, which is the stomping ground of the residents. They are really cute little aliens who cheerfully follow Blob around the 500 or so screens. Although Blob is fairly famous, not least for his driving skills, these are no off world autograph hunters and touching him drains his batteries — death results from a zero power situation. They also have the nasty habit of mutating into nut and bolt looking affairs that kill instantly on contact. Still, Blob has the anti-nasty gun for the little dears that try getting too familiar with his batteries.

Underground there's a multitude of strange plants and alien devices — some harmless, some deadly, and some like teleporters and hoverpads, highly useful. Hoverpads are collected by placing Blob on them and then pushing up. The pad rises and then Blob can fly about his business, picking up energy, bridge and ammunition-replacing items with carefree ease or even passing over a joystick to give him an extra life. Dotted around the caverns are several useful items including a network of transporters, anti-gravity lifts, security keys, a flexible thingy that gains once-only passage through the security doors and a Cheops pyramid. Some of these goodies can be picked up to help him gain access to more secure parts of the complex but not while Blob's on his hover pad so frequent zooming around looking for a hoverpark is called for.

Once parked, Blob can trundle off on his own, collecting items which are displayed in the top right of the screen. The transporters each have a destination code which must be discovered before teleporting to them. The destination is simply the name of the teleporter which is displayed upon entering the chamber. Security doors leading to various parts of the complex require either a code or a flexible thingy. The Cheops pyramids can only be used once and when picked up swap one item carried for another one, hopefully more useful.

The object of all this leaping, flying and walking kleptomania is to find and collect pieces of the planet's core, assembling them at its centre and stabilise the world.



CRITICISM

1 **At last Bubble Bus have brought out the brilliant *Starquake* on the Amstrad, and about time too. The game is a very good arcade/adventure, containing lots of colour and great graphics and sound of a very high quality. The sound effects are superb and a great tune plays during the title screens. On later levels you realise that a lot has gone into the development of this version, with a big difference in graphics between the early and later levels. *Starquake* is easy to get into with a very responsive control method, and the screens flick up instantly. I especially liked the limit on platforms, and bullets. *Starquake* is an excellent product and not just another straight Spectrum translation.**

2 I really enjoyed playing the Commodore version of this game so when I heard it was now available on the Amstrad I was happy. Stephen Crow seems to have the happy knack of writing games that on the face of it seem like a lot of others but which prove the point that there may be nothing new but there's a lot of new ways of using familiar ideas. Like *Wizard's Lair*, *Starquake* is highly playable, enjoyable to watch with its colourful and amusingly animated sprites and holds the attention admirably. Bubble Bus have a winner with this one.

3 *Bubble Bus have already enjoyed considerable success with Starquake on the Speccy and Commodore and as with most good Spectrum games it has converted well to the Amstrad. The superlative graphics and convincing sound effects make the game easy to watch and the gameplay is simple and easy to get into, making the whole thing instantly appealing. It's not quite as shoot em up as it first appears, though, and considerable thought must go into what you're doing if you stand any chance of completing the mission. A highly addictive game born of a good plot, excellent graphics and thought-provoking gameplay. Destined for the halls of fame.*

Presentation 88%
Tremendous titles, plenty of options and great on-screen appearance.

Graphics 92%
Lots of colour and well animated.

Sound 89%
Some reasonable tunes (very good on titles) and loads of spot FX.

Playability 93%
Easy to get into and lots to discover.

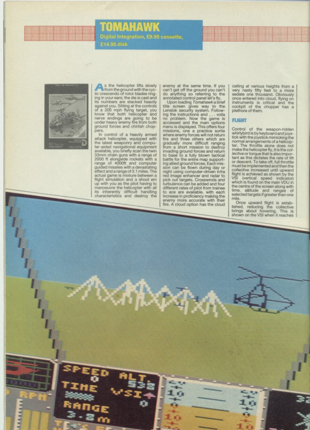
Addictive qualities 94%
500 odd screens should keep everyone happy for ages.

Value for money 92%
A lot of excellent game for the usual price.

Overall 91%
Stephen Crow deserves the hit, and you deserve to treat yourself.

TOMAHAWK

Digital Integration, £9.95 cassette, £14.95 disk



As the helicopter lifts slowly from the ground with the cyclic crescendo of rotor blades ringing in your ears; the die is cast and its numbers are stacked heavily against you. Sitting at the controls of a 200 mph flying target, you know that both helicopter and nerve endings are going to be under heavy enemy fire from both ground forces and chirlish choppers.

In control of a heavily armed attack helicopter, equipped with the latest weaponry and computer-aided navigational equipment available, you briefly scan the twin 33mm chain guns with a range of 2000 ft alongside rockets with a range of 4000ft and computer guided missiles with a devastating effect and a range of 3.1 miles. The actual game is mixture between a flight simulation and a shoot em up with you as the pilot having to manoeuvre the helicopter with all its inherently difficult handling characteristics and destroy the enemy at the same time. If you can't get off the ground you can't do anything so referring to the annotated control panel let's fly.

Upon loading *Tomahawk* a brief title screen gives way to the Lenslok security system. Following the instructions and . . . voila no problem. Now the game is accessed and the main options menu is displayed. This offers four missions, one a practice sortie where enemy forces will not return fire and three others which are gradually more difficult ranging from a short mission to destroy invading ground forces and return to base to a fully blown tactical battle for the entire map supporting allied ground forces. Each mission can be flown during day or night using computer-driven infra red image enhancer and radar to pick out targets. Crosswinds and turbulence can be added and four different rates of pilot from trainee to ace are available, with each increase in proficiency making the enemy more accurate with their fire. A cloud option has the cloud ceiling at various heights from a very nasty fifty feet to a more sedate one thousand. Obviously once entered into cloud, flying on instruments is critical and the cockpit of the chopper has a plethora of them.

FLIGHT

Control of the weapon-ridden whirlybird is by keyboard and joystick with the joystick mimicking the normal arrangements of a helicopter. The throttle alone does not make the helicopter fly, it is the *collective* or torque that is also important as this dictates the rate of lift or descent. To take off, full throttle must be implemented and then the collective increased until upward flight is achieved as shown by the VSI (vertical speed indicator) which is found on the main VDU in the centre of the screen along with time, altitude and ranges of selected targets if greater than one mile.

Once upward flight is established, reducing the collective brings about hovering. This is shown on the VSI when it reaches

zero and turns can now be done by using left or right rudder The rudder can be used to turn left or right at any speeds below 60 knots but turns at speed affect height and compensations can be made with the collective. Forward flight is established by dipping the nose, the velocity is shown by a cyan number under the speed heading. Backward flight is possible by raising the nose causing a decrease in forward speed and a gain in height, indicated by a white number for speed.

MAP

On the gridded map, brought up by pressing M, your own chopper is a white symbol and enemy helicopters are depicted by magenta symbols with both actually facing the way that they're travelling. The land is in coloured sectors, red denoting enemy territory and blue your own.

ENEMIES

Enemies are shown in red and include ground stations, tanks and, although not actively out to get you, the pylons scattered around which can make an awful mess if you should fly into them. The enemy choppers appear in black and there is usually one per sector. Any allied machines are coloured blue.

Missions differ in what is expected of you but all have the same basic chopper and armament. Accurate navigation is essential for plotting routes, tracking enemy ground and air forces and for returning to base on completion of a mission or just returning to a friendly helipad for refuelling, repairs or to stock up on arms.

ATTACK

To attack enemy positions or machines, either air-to-air or ground attack mode must be implemented. Attack modes automatically turn on the weapons systems and target the attack computer which is the gridded screen located on the left hand side of the control panel. This picks up targets within one mile and displays them symbolically, giving their range in feet underneath. One of the three attack weapons must then be used depending upon how close you want to get a particular enemy. Three different types of sight are employed. A cross hair denotes the chain gun with a range of 2000ft; an open X is rockets which are pretty deadly up to 4000ft; and square sights are for the missiles which lock onto and destroy a target just over three miles away. These are deadly but only eight missiles can be carried at any one time. The gun and rockets are manually tracked and targets must be 'flown' into the sights.

Damage to your helicopter can be to structural or internal systems. There are four warning lights under the VDU covering engines, navigational computer, weapons or tads. Flight is still possible with these lights on but effectiveness in certain areas is reduced. Structural damage is indicated by red areas on the navigational computer's helicopter symbol which flashes in thirds. A quick return to a helipad should have these fixed in a jiffy but how do you get back with only a gallon of fuel, no navigational computer, one engine lost and all your weapons used up . . . ?

CRITICISM

1 **This is what a flight simulation should be. Digital Integration have made a superlative game and quite rightly have protected it with the much criticised Lenslok. I had no trouble at all with it and it would seem the implementation of this security system will not be dogged by the problems associated with Firebird's** Elite**. The graphics for** Tomahawk **are clean and functional and well complemented by the atmospheric and convincing sound FX. Helicopter flying is little tricky at first but with practice it is soon able to mimic the actions of the real thing. The excitement of this game is oh-so-apparent when skimming along, 20 feet off the ground at breakneck speeds. Once familiar with the instruments it is very easy to fly in cloud or even at night. A wonderful conversion of phenomenal fun for two fivers exchange rate.**

2 What we have here can only be described as an almost perfect combat simulation game. Many other companies have tried to use a helicopter in a simulation exercise before but have not been anywhere near as successful. The only moan I had about the game was the Lenslok protection device. You have to almost use a magnifying glass to read the code. This apart *Tomahawk* is lots of fun to play even if it is difficult. Everything in it is graphically well designed and the sound effects are good. Another brilliant Amstrad game.

3 *I'm always a little unsure of simulation games. I never seem to get the hang of them before interest has diminished. Here we have an exception. The controls aren't unwieldy and before long it's possible to experience the thrill of low level flying whilst knocking out enemy targets. The game has been realistically implemented on the machine with graphics and sound effects that add admirably to its atmosphere. For me however, the real thrill of* **Tomahawk** *comes out when playing the night scenarios. These are excellent. The graphics imitate an infra red viewing system and, while this makes a scenario more difficult to complete, it adds to the feeling of tension and challenge tremendously. The variety of play and potential for skill development with this game is phenomenal.*

Presentation 91%
Slick with a plethora of options.

Graphics 93%
Smooth and precise animation with good colour.

Sound 90%
No music just atmospheric and convincing spot effects.

Playability 84%
It takes time to learn to fly a combat helicopter, but it's fun . . .

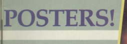
Addictive qualities 92%
. . . and once you're in the air you won't want to come down.

Value for money 90%
Ten quid to fly a helicopter is a bargain.

Overall 92%
A superlative flight simulation and a leader of the genre.

An AMTIX! ACCOLADE


GIANT
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A superb series of famous covers by Oliver Frey can be yours in poster form. Printed on one side in glowing colour, they each measure a giant 80 x 57 centimetres (about eight magazine pages) and come carefully rolled up in a postal tube (useful for all sorts of things) at a mere £2.50 each (p&p and VAT inclusive). But if you order all four then you get them for only £7.50 — four for the price of three!
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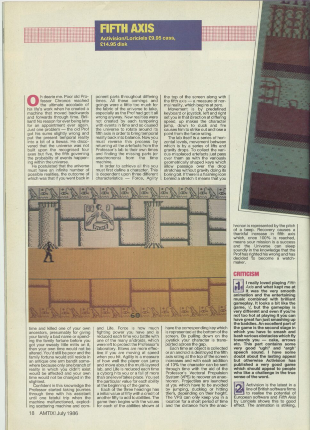
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FIFTH AXIS

Activision/Loriciels £9.95 cass, £14.95 disk

Oh dearie me. Poor old Professor Chronos reached the ultimate accolade of his life's work when he created a machine that moved backwards and forwards through time. Brilliant! No reason for ever being late for an appointment ever again. Just one problem — the old Prof got his sums slightly wrong and put the present temporal reality into a bit of a tiswas. He discovered that the universe was not built upon the recognised four axes but five, the fifth governing the probabilty of events happening within the universe.

He postulated that the universe must have an infinite number of possible realities, the outcome of which was that if you went back in time and killed one of your own ancestors, presumably for giving your family a bad name or spending the family fortune before you got your sweaty little mitts on it, then your own time would not be altered. You'd still be poor and the family fortune would still reside in an antique one arm bandit somewhere because only one branch of reality in which you didn't exist would be affected and your own time would not be changed in the slightest.

Confident in this knowledge the Professor started taking journies through time with his assistant until one fateful trip when the machine malfunctioned, exploding scattering machine and component parts throughout differing times. All these comings and goings were a little too much for the fabric of the universe to take, especially as the Prof had got it all wrong anyway. New realities were not created by each tampering with events in time and so caused the universe to rotate around its fifth axis in order to bring temporal reality back into balance. Now you must reverse this process by returning all the artefacts from the Professor's lab to their own times and finding the missing parts (or anachronons) from the time machine.

In order to achieve all this you must first define a character. This is dependent upon three different characteristics — Force, Agility and Life. Force is how much fighting power you have and is reduced each time you battle with one of the many androids, which were left to protect the Professor's laboratory. Blows are more effective if you are moving at speed when you hit. Agility is a measure of how well the player can jump and move about the multi-layered lab, and Life is reduced each time a cyborg hits you or a fall of more than one level takes place. You set the particular value for each ability at the beginning of the game.

Each of the three headings has a initial value of fifty with a credit of another fifty to add to abilities. The game then begins with the values for each of the abilities shown at the top of the screen along with the fifth axis — a measure of normal reality, which begins at zero.

Movement is by predefined keyboard or joystick. left and right set you in that direction at differing speed, up makes the character jump, down to duck and fire causes him to strike out and lose a point from the force rating.

The lab itself is a series of horizontal levels, movement between which is by a series of lifts and gravity drops. To collect the various misplaced artefacts just pass over them as with the variously geometrically shaped keys which allow passage over the drop stretches without gravity doing its boring bit. If there is a flashing icon behind a stretch it means that you have the corresponding key which is represented at the bottom of the screen. By pulling down on the joystick your character is transported across the gap.

Each time an object is collected or an android is destroyed the fifth axis rating at the top of the screen increases and with each addition of 10% the character can be sent through time with the aid of the Professor's Vectoral Propulsion System (VPS) to recover an anachronon. Projectiles are launched at you which have to be avoided by jumping, ducking or hitting them, depending on their height. The VPS can only keep you in a location for a short period of time and the distance from the anachronon is represented by the pitch of a beep. Recovery causes a thankful increase in fifth axis which, once 100% is reached, means your mission is a success and the Universe can sleep soundly in the knowledge that the Prof has righted his wrong and has decided to become a watchmaker.

CRITICISM

1 **I really loved playing *Fifth Axis* and what kept me at it was the very smooth animation and the entertaining music combined with brilliant gameplay. It looks a bit like the game, *V*, but the gameplay is very different and even if you're not too hot at playing it you can have great fun just smashing up the baddies. An excellent part of the game is the second stage in which you have to smash and bash various obstacles which fly towards you — cake, arrows etc. This part contains some very good 'ugh!' and 'argh' speech sound. I have some doubt about the lasting appeal but otherwise Activision has published a very good game which should appeal to people who like a challenge in the true sense of the word.**

2 Activision is the latest in a line of British software firms to realise the potential of European software and *Fifth Axis* by Loriciels shows this to good effect. The animation is striking,

and sound effects are well done and convincing. The game suffers from an unfortunate resemblance to *V* but the actual gameplay defies any definite comparison. The music is good, and smooth scrolling as well as good colour makes the game very easy on the eye — a good point as completing the game should take even hardened arcaders quite a while.

3 *This is excellent program shows that French software houses are now turning out the business for the Amstrad. This is one of the best games I've played for a long time. It has marvellous graphics, a brilliant tune, and your life lasts long enough for you to play the game properly. I could have played* Fifth Access *for hours on end and the only drawback I could find was the comparative difficulty in getting back up to the higher levels. This hardly stops it being a great game that should be bought in very large numbers.*

Presentation 91%
Good title screen and replete with options.

Graphics 92%
Lifelike running, thumping, pushing and kicking.

Sound 92%
Brilliant sound FX and very good tune.

Playability 90%
Great to get on with from the word *allez!*

Addictive qualities 88%
It's got that Je ne sais quois but not the Nth degree.

Value for money 89%
A good bargain from across the Channel.

Overall 91%
Tres bien mes amis.

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REVIEWS

TURBO ESPRIT

Durell, £8.95 cassette

Turbo Esprit puts you in the driving seat in a war against drug traffickers where the only things that can be relied upon is your own nerve, the Esprit and the fact that drug pushers are mean and not averse to making a few traffic violations in the course of the day. An armoured delivery car is bringing drugs into one of the three cities that are chosen initially to be policed. The game begins with a menu asking for a choice between four cities in which to practice your particular brand of vigilantism. The main menu then proffers a keyboard or joystick option, a choice of four levels with cars getting gradually faster with each increase in level, a practice mode where Lotus handling can be sharpened and lastly a high scores table which also includes a list of highest penalty scores.

Once options are sorted, the game is just a button's press away. A cursory screen carries the skill level and number of lives which begins with four. The screen is split into two halves; the top one showing the sleek red lines of the Esprit sitting patiently on the road, the bottom being the dashboard of the big red shark. Push forward on the joystick and the Esprit accelerates, pulling back decreases speed to a halt and then into reverse. To turn right push the joystick to the right and press fire and vice versa to turn left. Turning whilst driving backwards is similar to the real thing and may take non-drivers a time to master. Pressing M displays a map of the city with streets being split up into blocks, numbers designating their distance to the East or North. Messages giving the smugglers' locations are given in the form of E9 or N14 at the bottom of the screen. To pinpoint them more accurately select map mode and scroll the map in the direction of the street in question. A white circle denotes smugglers cars and you are a diamond shape.

You score points for stopping the drug pushers by either bumping into the back of their black cars or shooting them with the machine gun that's apparently an optional extra with Esprits! Biggest scores are awarded for bumping cars once they're carrying drugs. Stopping them by shooting is very effective but scores less. Once all the pushers' cars are stopped it's a race to get the supply car before it leaves the city. The armour carried by this vehicle means that bumping it into submission is the only way to stop it. The nasty men in the black and red cars are not without protection though and have put a price on your head which hit men, in the white cars, would dearly like to pick up. They'll shoot the Lotus if at all possible and even if they're not always totally accurate, they may damage the car in which case you must find a garage and park at the side of it whilst repairs or refuelling takes place.

Racing round the city at breakneck speeds is okay for the villains who defy every rule in the highway code but being a goody in a Turbo Esprit means picking up penalty points for any misdemeanour such as bumping innocent cars, squashing pedestrians or knocking down road signs. Yes life as a Turbo Esprit driver with a mission means that life is spent entirely in the fast lane — even if it may turn out to be short but very, very fast.

Presentation 83%
Packaging and instructions have smooth lines.

Graphics 55%
Nothing special at all.

Sound 72%
Lacking in music power.

Playability 75%
One of those games you have to play at least once.

Addictive qualities 75%
You may become hooked on it, but the staying power is dubious.

Value for money 75%
Cheaper than the actual car.

Overall 74%
Probably the closest most people will get to driving a Turbo Esprit.

CRITICISM

1

Sitting behind the wheel of a 150 mile per hour Lotus Turbo Esprit racing through the city to break the hold of a ring of drug pushers sounds like a good plot for a game. It's a shame that Durell haven't come up with a winning formula. The graphics are interesting but seem to be imprecise with the dashboard graphics entirely cosmetic with very little use to the player. There is poor joystick control and very little to do except race up and down streets for the greatest part of the game and this highlights the game's poor atmosphere. Having said that I did play it for quite a while but more for the frustration and pleasure of writing off almost a quarter of a million pounds worth of flashy motor. If you like wrecking cars and/or your patience then buy it.

2

In *Turbo Esprit* you drive around the streets of a city, not as easy as it sounds because the controls are unusual and turning left or right can cause problems. It is also hard to know where you are as your position is only shown on a map and if you look at this you might drive into another car or road works. This is difficult to play and can be frustrating but it is also addictive. If all else fails you can still try to complete a game without going straight to the top of the penalty table.

3

TURBO ESPRIT is a good game on a different theme. Instead of just blowing things up or driving at breakneck speed you have the chance to do both. The game comes in a well presented package with detailed instructions and it is a very easy game to play. I do not think anyone could resist the temptation to play this game at least once, but whether it has any real lasting appeal, I'm not so sure.

BOMB JACK

Elite, £8.95 cassette, £14.95 disk

CRITICISM

1 BOMB JACK is another compelling game from Elite. The graphics are of the Commodore variety — very podgy — but the gameplay is a la Spectrum. BOMB JACK is very addictive and is definitely one for arcade freaks. The sound really blasts out of the poor Amstrad speaker even though it consists of little more than sound FX. Jack himself is well animated and the way he jumps around the screen brings out the loveable superhero image. The graphics are very detailed and colour has been put to good use. My only complaint with this game is that it is far too easy!

2 The first thing I noticed about this game was that it was unclear what was happening. The graphics are a strange mixture of well drawn backgrounds with platforms which have nothing to do with them, and floating bombs which look more like cherries. The game is not hard to play and later screens are only made harder by speeding up the sprites. Huge scores are obtained with little effort.

3 Within seconds of starting this game you can see how good it is. It's loads of fun to play and so addictive that it's very difficult to leave. The graphics are well defined and very colourful. One drawback is the joystick control, which is not very good, and although the keyboard control is better, the layout are poor.

From the Tehkan Arcade game of the same name comes the Amstrad conversion of *Bomb Jack*. Jack is a tiny caped crusader who sproings and cavorts around your screen in a bid to rid the world of all things nasty and explosive. Hence the title — *Bomb Jack*.

Jack's task is not an easy one. He has to leap about defusing the twenty four bombs dangling on each screen. He's quite a versatile little fellow, despite his diminutive size, and can sproing in all directions. To make life a little easier there's a super-leap option which sends him soaring to great heights in order to collect the bombs. But even super heroes are susceptible to the laws of gravity, so what goes up must come down. Fortunately, it is possible for him to slow down as he plummets earthwards and he can even hover for a short period of time.

As if it wasn't enough to expect Jack to successfully defuse two dozen bombs per screen and save all of humanity into the bargain, he also has to contend with lots of nasties. Little robotic spacemen patrol the platforms and contact with them proves very fatal indeed. The spacesuit clad terrors gradually make their way down the screen and when they reach the ground they transform into flying birds, making them all the more deadly. The bird-like nasties look innocent enough, but they anticipate Jack's every move and always crop up just where he needs them least. Contact with one of them loses a life.

No matter how much the odds seem to be stacked against him, our Jack does have a few allies. If a disk emblazoned with a 'P' comes bounding onto the screen and Jack manages to collect it, then all the nasties turn into smiling yellow suns which can be collected for extra points. Bonus coins also grace the screen occasionally and by getting them Jack can double, treble or quadruple his score. 'Extra' coins give Jack an additional life.

There are five separate screens, each containing twenty four bombs and an arrangement of platforms. Each screen shows a different location from around the world, so Jack might find himself sproinging around the Great Pyramids one moment and a Walt Disney-style fairy castle the next.

Bomb Jack moves around a screen by jumping from the various platforms which are layered at different heights. He can't hop through the platforms, but he can trudge along them — defusing any bombs in his path — and use them as a launching pad to get to other parts of the screen.

The bombs are defused when Jack passes over them. At the start of each screen the fuse on one bomb starts to burn, closely followed by the others as the lit bombs are collected. Jack gains more points for collecting burning bombs than dead ones. It doesn't matter how long Jack takes to defuse the deadly sizzling devices, for they never explode. However, the longer Jack takes to clear a screen of bombs, the more nasties appear and try to kill him.

The odds are stacked against the crusading mite . . . Will he be able to defuse the bombs in time? Or will the evil nasties get to him first? As usual, it is up to you . . .

Presentation 80%
Adequate instructions and generally very good.

Graphics 73%
Well defined, but a little hazy at times.

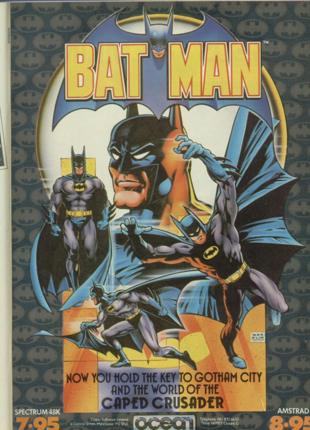
Sound 80%
A real blast of meaty sound FX.

Playability 79%
Perhaps a little too easy to play.

Addictive qualities 82%
Initially a game that is hard to leave.

Value for money 81%
The normal price for an above average game.

Overall 79%
Another thoroughbred from the Elite stable.


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TAPE & DISK

WANTED MONTY MOLE

Monty makes a daring coal snatching raid to his local pit. Filling his bucket as he dodges the trundling coal crushers and roaming coal drills. With his bucket filled, Monty makes his escape, only to surface and find his way is blocked. Seizing his only chance Monty collects the secret ballot papers and vote casting scroll. But when it comes to the heavy stuff a personal bodyguard of super fit pickets and deadly flying hairsprays, put up an almighty struggle with our valiant Mole.

TAPE & DISK

MONTY ON THE RUN

Super fit and desperate for freedom, our frightened hero finds refuge with the criminal underworld who offer him his chance to breathe fresh air and bask in the sunlight once again. Monty must select the correct five elements of his freedom kit from the many he's offered and not miss out on the hidden gold coins that will make him a mole of leisure.

TAPE

ABU SIMBEL PROFANATION

Over 3000 years ago, Ramses II built the Temple of Abu Simbel. For over 30 centuries, all its secrets have remained hidden to human eyes.

Johnny Jones, hero and explorer extraordinaire, has entered Abu Simbel and fallen victim to the Pharoah's spell. In order to continue his adventures he must free himself from the spell, reach the mortuary chamber and discover its secrets!

TAPE

THING ON A SPRING

The evil goblin is wreaking havoc on an unsuspecting world, casting spells and banishing its treasures to his underground factory deep in the bowels of the earth. How can he be stopped? What can we do? Who can do it? There's only one saviour – our hero – Thing on a Spring! Complete the magical jigsaw and break his fiendish spell.

TAPE **8.95**

DISK **12.95**

Gremlin Graphics Software Limited 1985. Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: (0742) 753423



THE LAST V8

Mastertronic £2.99 cassette

Earth has been plunged into the very depths of despair following a global nuclear war. All of Mankind was either wiped out or mutated by the high levels of radiation into one of a strange alter-race. The only people to survive relatively unscathed were the scientists and pillars of society, who will one day populate the new beginnings of what once was the human race.

The year is 2008 and seven years have elapsed since the end of the war. Seven years is a long time to spend in an underground nuclear fall-out shelter. Soon bored with the endless games of 'Scrabble' and 'I Spy', one scientist decides to build the car of the future to while away the years. Using the shell of a car from the 1980's the scientist created a fantastic super car, capable of withstanding the high radiation levels on Earth's surface. It's also turbo charged with an eight cylinder, 949 bhp engine which gives a top speed of over 400kph.

Now, you have been given the thumbs up to take it into the outside world to make contact with the remains of Earth's population and see what effects the nuclear winter has had on them.

However, as you zoom around the barren wasteland that used to be the countryside, an urgent message flashes onto your control panel, telling you that a delayed action nuclear warhead will shortly be detonating not far from your location. You have just minutes to get back to the safety of your underground bunker before the radiation shields on the car disintegrate. Even in your supercharged V8 it will be cutting it fine.

The screen shows the dashboard of the V8 as well as an aerial view of the remains of the city and the route your car is taking along the winding road. The screen scrolls from left to right, simulating the movement of the car.

The car can be manoeuvred by using either joystick or keyboard. It can rotate both left and right, and accelerate up to 410 kph. Apart from the obvious hazard of the radiation, other perils await you on your maiden run. The car must be kept within the confines of the road as any contact with obstacles on the roadside results in the sound of grinding metal and smashing glass and you die. Only one life is given and if you lose it then it's back to the beginning of the track.

Underneath the main screen are the controls of the V8. The monitor on the far left of the screen flashes up messages from base, such as when the nuclear bomb is going to explode. This is indicated by a mushroom cloud on the monitor screen. The middle window shows how much time is left for you to complete the mission, how much fuel is left in the car and how much turbo-boost is left at your disposal. It also shows the deterioration state of the radiation shields. Once these are gone then unfortunately you are destroyed.

The final window shows the top of the steering wheel with the speedometer and the revs counter below this. Time is of the essence in this game, but the faster you drive, the harder it is to navigate your way safely around the tight corners and tricky bends.

Presentation 76%
Nice packaging and colourful loading screen.

Graphics 79%
Quite detailed and colourful.

Sound 75%
The tune played throughout is good but can become monotonous.

Playability 57%
Too monotonous and frustrating to be playable.

Addictive qualities 58%
It can become somewhat tedious.

Value for money 66%
As budget games go this isn't too bad . . .

Overall 60%
. . . but it's not that good.

CRITICISM

1

I'd heard a few comments about THE LAST V8, some good, some bad, and I was quite glad to get a look at it first hand. On the front cover of the game it said 'speech synthesis', well I couldn't find any speech anywhere in the program. The music, which plays all through the game, is very good. The screen is presented very well with some very nice detailed graphics, but the game itself is very boring with not much going on. The control of the car is very jerky and unresponsive, and this makes the game near impossible to play. I don't like THE LAST V8 much because there isn't much to do, and driving around all day becomes very boring. It's a good game if you like lots of nice graphics, but the gameplay lets down what is potentially a good plot.

2

As budget games go this is a jolly good one but it's impossible to say that it is addictive. As you are looking down on the car you have a fine view of the back drops which are drawn beautifully with great detail. The game has a jolly tune as you drive along, but after a while it does get on your nerves. For three quid it's worth further investigation.

3

I think that THE LAST V8 is a good value game from Mastertronic. The graphics are well defined and colourful, but the sound is not very good. Control is the major problem — the joystick is too sensitive for decent gameplay — and the course is very difficult. If you ignore the game it plays itself so I'm not sure what the ultimate objective really is!



CORE

A 'n' F, £8.95 cassette

CRITICISM

1 Despite the nicely rounded detailed graphics I found CORE a bit to boring to play. The animation of the main character is first class, and the backgrounds are filled with lots of crevices and icicles. The sound only consists of a few spot FX — not even a little tune or the pitter patter of walking. The game is very well presented with a good manual which covers most things, but the game itself does not contain enough in the way of a challenge to make it exceptional. The read out display at the top of the screen is very comprehensive, and the redesigned character set gives a very computerish look to it. Sadly the whole game is a bit too boring for me.

2 Oh dear, what a disappointment this game turned out to be. I had seen the advertising and the game looked full of promise but in fact the end product is sub-standard. The animation of Andrew Angello is good and the backgrounds are quite interesting, but the sound is disappointing — there is only the odd spot effect — and generally the game lacks playability. One good point — the game is well packaged, and there is a comprehensive instruction manual.

3 I'm afraid CORE is not one of my favourite games. It is icon driven and, as is the case with most of the genre, the end product is below standard. The graphics are acceptable but still leave a lot to be desired. The general game is poor and it is not one which will feature in most people's list of favourite games. Certainly not one for my collection.

The Federation has a problem on its hands. Again. An unknown alien contingent is wiping out whole populations on asteroid colonies. Dastards! These asteroids used to be mined for fuels essential to inter-stellar travel, but now they provide accomodation for Federation Scientists who are harmlessly investigating deep space. Andrew Angello has been assigned the task of finding a reason for these attacks and you must aid him in his mission.

Word has it that the aliens are planning an attack on Asteroid colony Eroc 1. But even as you speed towards your destination a message flashes onto the screen saying that it is already too late. The aliens have been and gone, killing every human in the colony. Now, the only way that Andrew Angello can throw any light on the mysterious attacks is by finding the Eroc 1 computer's bio-memory cassettes. These have been hidden deep within the old mine workings on the asteroid. Only by examining these tapes does the Federation stand any chance of planning an effective defence strategy against the abominable aliens.

Andrew Angello is transported down into the warren of abandoned mines on Eroc 1. There is no trace of the aliens except for various pieces of strange machinery that they have left behind as a sort of booby trap. Any contact with these saps Angello's energy and prolonged brushes with them means death.

The rate at which Andrew's power is being drained is shown by the screen colour. This changes from bright colours through to dull colours, until there is no more energy left and he sinks slowly into the ground and dies.

Various pieces of equipment essential to your mission are buried beneath the ground in the mines, so tools must be located to enable Andrew to dig out the required bits and pieces.

There are four levels to the mining system on Eroc 1. Andrew moves around by way of anti-gravity lifts and teleports. The anti-gravity lifts are indicated by caves or arrows at the bottom of the screen. Teleports transport Andrew to different levels on the Asteroid. He simply stands on them and reappears at a different location in the workings.

But, every time Andrew uses the Teleports or the anti-gravity lifts he uses some of his power. So, to compensate for this, battery dumps are positioned at various locations on each level. A battery indicator shows how much energy is left in the battery that is being used.

The visual display at the top of the screen charts Andrew's progress during the mission. The screen to the far left shows the directions in which he can move from his current position. Below this are icons which perform various useful functions when activated. The icon window has four separate displays. The first asks the computer for help. The second pauses the game. The third gets Andrew back to his previous position and the fourth saves this position if he has managed to get the cassette.

Unfortunately, The Federation have not supplied Andrew with a map of the mine workings on Eroc 1. In order to complete the mission completely one must be compiled, or else Andrew will be stumbling blindly around Eroc 1 and may never be able to locate the bio-memory segments and solve the mystery of the asteroid belt . . .

Presentation 76%
Nothing special, but nicely packaged.

Graphics 72%
Interesting backdrops and the animation of the main character is good.

Sound 45%
Only limited spot FX.

Playability 57%
Fairly good but nothing exciting.

Addictive qualities 57%
It soon becomes fairly boring.

Value for money 60%
Average price for an average game.

Overall 62%
An ordinary game which lacks excitement.



MAX HEADROOM

Quicksilva £9.95 cassette

Gasp! Big Time TV's Max Headroom has been kidnapped by evil Network 23 who want him to help boost their falling ratings. Big Time are upset at losing their star attraction and have sent intrepid hack, Edison Carter, to try and get Max back.

Max is held in Network 23's 211 floor skyscraper, protected by a multitude of security robots. Edison must try and avoid them release the Max personality from Network 23's computer before they lose him to the 'other side' forever.

Before Edison and his controller, Theora Jones, can even begin on their mission of mercy they must gain security access to the lifts in the building by lighting the seven segment LED in the shape of the letter 'E'. There is a time limit to this. If the code isn't cracked then access is refused and the lift goes out of control, dumping Edison on a random floor. However, if the display is lit correctly then Edison has gained access to the Executive floors of the building and the hunt can begin.

Once on the Executive levels of Network 23's monstrous building, Edison must break more codes in order to gain control over the security cameras. A little tune is played and a series of lights are lit. You must remember the tune and play it back — in reverse! It is quite handy for Edison to control the cameras because then Theora can tell the position of any trigger-happy security robots.

There are also the two professional hitmen, Breughel and Mahler, after Edison, a sinister pair who have been hired by Network 23 to see off Edison before he gets the chance to release Max.

Max is held prisoner in the computer lab on the Presidential levels of the building and to gain access to this floor, Edison must break the Presidential code. This is eight digits long and has been split into four, two digit components.

Around the edges of the main screen are a series of icon windows representing various options. The top left one calls the lift, the one below is the tune code for security access to the Executive floors. The third shows which floors Breughel and Mahler are on and what floors you have control over. The last icon asks you to choose which floor you would like to try accessing. The top right icon is the security camera. Below this is an icon to open doors to the offices and there's a pause mode which saves Edison's energy, but wastes time. At the bottom of this list is a run mode which is very useful for scampering away from security robots. At the very bottom of the screen a chart shows how much strength Edison has left. He loses strength every time a security robot shoots at him. When this level gets too low he dies.

The mission is set against the clock, giving Theora and Edison only six hours in which to rescue Max. Will they be able to do it in time, or will Mr Headroom remain a prisoner of Network 23 forever and ever and ever . . . Amen?

Presentation 78%
Nice packaging shame about the game.

Graphics 69%
One of the game's most striking features.

Sound 73%
Nice tunes throughout.

Playability 70%
Appears to have a challenge at first . . .

Addictive qualities 68%
. . . but it's nowhere near as compulsive as the television show.

Value for money 70%
A bit overpriced for what it finally offers.

Overall 68%
An excellent idea dies in reality.

CRITICISM

1

I was looking forward to seeing this game after enjoying the much acclaimed television programme but once again the product has failed to live up to expectations. The idea is great but the whole idea has been badly represented, particularly from the point of view of the graphics. The use of icons has not helped control so it's hard to know what to do at times. The best part is the tune and even that dries up after a while. It is a shame that Quicksilva has been unable to get the act together on this occasion. They could have made a lot more of such a cult figure.

2

We've had to wait quite along time for *Max Headroom*, but Binary Design has spent a good time on perfecting it. I would say that the programmers have probably done the best they could for Max but I don't think the game idea is up to much. I found that after playing it for some time I got quite bored doing the same old thing — a save game option should have been implemented here to make people more eager to come back to it. The graphics are of a high quality and suit the atmosphere well, the sound that continues all through the game is also excellent, with lots of different tunes at all times of the game. I found that *Max* was the sort of game that is good fun to play first time, but I doubt if I would come back to it again!

3

Ever since MAX HEADROOM was first advertised I have looked forward to seeing the Amstrad version but sadly the end product is disappointing. The graphics are fairly good but in this case the icons make gameplay confusing and after a while you tend to lose interest. There is pretty music with different tunes throughout the game but it does become monotonous after a while. I think Quicksilva have failed to use Max's cult following and the resulting game is only average instead of mega.

SHOGUN

Virgin Games, £9.95 cassette, £14.95 disk

At the turn of the fifteenth century, English sailing ships were travelling far and wide across oceans, discovering new cultures that were inevitably exploited. New technologies were used to add to the already considerable wealth of riches, goods and achievement enjoyed by the gentry of the land whilst the poor went hungry.

During this era the orderly system of Japan underwent major political upheavals. Six hundred years of civil strife had seen a well-established feudal system protected against bandits and revolting peasants and perpetuated under the administration of the mighty warlords, or Daimyo. Whilst keeping the system steady the Daimyo also vied against each other in a bitter struggle to become Shogun — second only to the Emperor himself, but the real ruler!

In Virgin's *Shogun*, you become involved in this struggle to become Supreme warlord. The game begins with your choosing a character from the forty available from the lowliest but highest scoring peasant, through Samurai and servants, to one of the two Warlords, Toranaga or Ishido, who both begin the game having already gained ascendency and as such earn less points than their serf lackies.

As in Clavell's famous novel (and the TV series based on it), the shipwrecked Englishman, John Blackthorne, is washed up onto a beach and thrown into the centre of this violent political storm. Play is generally of the arcade/adventure sort, the selected character picking up objects and storing them in one of their pockets. But it isn't only objects you collect in *Shogun*, people are vitally important and influence over your 'followers' is extended through money, power or just plain politeness. Money, or followers gained, are displayed at the right of the screen. Eight actions are available via icon commands with the object of the game being to collect twenty followers who must be persuaded to the player's cause. There are attack and befriend which, depending upon how you feel, will either wield a dagger or throw grinning suns in an attempt to use a winning smile to gain followers. Don't overdo it though, some people are insulted if they are the object of a grinning idiot's attentions and turn their back.

The Give icon donates items to worthy causes which, more often than not, are people that you would like to become personal friends. Gifts can be anything portable, with amounts of money varied by the joystick. The Eye icon examines people or objects (even those held in your pockets) by moving the cursor over them and pressing fire. People may be ordered around by accessing the Speech Bubble which offers a menu of orders. Pause Game and Drop Item icons follow the good old formula and the Surrender icon helps keep your Karma when in dire straits but loses you respect with followers and may mean the victor relieving you of any possessions held.

If things begin to look a little dodgy then the game can be saved onto tape with the cassette icon. Strength is shown by a yellow line which decreases with time, fighting and smiling at people (there are a lot of muscles involved with a good grin). As the game progresses, other characters are attempting to become Shogun too, also interacting with other players, collecting followers and picking up money, food and items. If another character becomes Shogun the game is over unless you are first to take your twenty followers to the Shogun's palace where the Emperor will have a word in your ear.

CRITICISM

1 They say beauty is only skin deep so the fact that this game is slightly marred by flickery sprites doesn't bother me much. The fact is, the game is deceptively deep with far more permutations in play than can ever be realised for review purposes (unless you would like us to take several months to figure the game out). After initial disappointment and frustration over the playability and graphics you soon find yourself becoming accustomed to a rather unusual style of play and appreciate the graphics which, considering the size of the game, are of a respectable quality. Don't give up easily on this one. There's more to SHOGUN than meets the eye.

2 There's definitely a very good game trying to fight its way out of this program. A great plot and good use of icons are joined by the unworthy stablemates of flickering graphics and poor animation. Charles Goodwin, ex of the Gang of Five, did the lion's share of the graphics which he had to pack into the already overburdoned memory which has to keep track of over forty characters throughout the game, interacting between them and keeping up with the various events. It's a pity the complexity of the program has meant a compromise in the quality of the Five's graphics, which although colourful, suffer from an awful case of flicker and bad masking, unworthy of their otherwise excellent graphical work. I liked *Shogun*, which boasts some very logical use of icons. It is a shame the only reason this game is not a complete winner with me is the graphics spoil an otherwise excellent and compelling game.

3 SHOGUN has taken a long time coming, probably a reflection on the amount of compromises that have had to be reached between plot, character interaction and computer memory. The result is a little disorienting visually, great backdrops (perhaps a bit garish though) and poor animation. I found it difficult to establish an instant relationship with it, but once done I realised that Virgin made the right compromise and went for the plot rather than stunning graphics. There's nothing particularly fast in the action sense here, but well into a game the panic pressure of so much happening at once begins to work, and SHOGUN turns out to be a different and highly interesting idea.

Presentation 88%
Nice packaging and instructions, clean and colourful look with a beautiful loading screen.

Graphics 83%
Tremendous looking backdrops, plenty of variety, but a little jerky on the sprite animation.

Sound 60%
Bleep spot FX but nice loading tune.

Playability 72%
Nice use of icons eases way into an otherwise difficult game to get into.

Addictive qualities 83%
Over 40 ways to be 'someone' and different ways to win the game, make for many plays.

Value for money 78%
A quid over the odds (licencing fee?) for a sizeable game.

Overall 82%
A good game that loses some of its good looks due to the compromise of memory over animation.



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WINTER GAMES

US Gold, £9.95 cassette

The crisp sound of blades cutting through crusty snow adds to the already nerve tingling atmosphere as competitors vie against each other at death defying speeds and heights above ground in order to gain points and prove who's the fastest on the piste. To do this and be overall champion, points are awarded for each of the seven events that comprise *Winter Games II*. The events are **bobsleigh, hot dog aerials, speed skating, ski jump, figure skating, free skating**, and **biathlon**, with up to four players competing against each other in each event.

The main menu gives a list of options: competing in two events; competing in one event; practising one event; showing world high scores and a define controls option for each player, so they player can use their favourite means of control. After every game a medals' list is made up.

CRITICISM

1 WINTER GAMES was expected to be brilliant and it has certainly come close to perfection. Although the backdrops are excellent the graphics used for your figure has let the game down. As with most sport simulations, control is the main bone of contention, the worst offenders being speed skating and bobsleigh. I can't think of any sports simulation that is better than this, but that's no guarantee of fun for all because some will expect more!

2 This is the best sports simulation on the Amstrad, mainly due to the superb graphics and the beautiful tunes that accompany them. The game could prove to be a bit of a bore for non disk drive owning people, due to the time consuming task of loading one or two events at a time. The game is very good value for money as the compilation doesn't contain any bad events which is so often the case. *Winter Games* is very well presented with numerous options allowing you to have a very good practice at all the games. It is highly playable and easy to get used to — if you give the very comprehensive instructions a good read. I'm sure that any armchair sportsman/woman would love it in their Amstrad collection.

3 Although WINTER GAMES was excellent on the Spectrum, things haven't gone right for US Gold this time around in the conversion for the Amstrad. The graphical quality of the backdrops is excellent with superlative detail in the scenery but this attention to detail is not replicated in the graphics of the actual contestants which, in some cases, are not drawn at all well. The colour used is wonderful but sound is a little unrealistic at times. The instructions are long and forbidding but provide everything you need to know and help enormously when first starting.

BOBSLEIGH A map of the course covers the majority of the screen with a small window that shows a cross-section of the bobsleigh run. As the bobsleigh moves down the run, a red line marks your progress. At each turning you must steer in the opposite direction to the bend to counter centrifugal force. A timer ticks away as the run is made and an overall time is shown once the finishing line is reached. Three attempts are allowed and the best score(s) are put forward for the medal list with gold, silver and bronze being awarded to the top scores.

HOT DOG ACROBATICS

Press fire to start the run and once having left terra firma, a series of twists, pulls and pushes on the joystick (or fast dabbing at the keyboard) result in various predefined moves. All you need to do is to get them all done before the freedom of flying through air gives way to the reality of ploughing nose first through snow, as landing with your skis in a tangle will result in a score of zero, and a very cold proboscis. Once through this event it's time to load the next part of the game which is speed skating and the ski jump.

SPEED SKATINMG

Skating at speed is relatively easy. All it needs is a steady left right motion of the legs to propel yourself forward over 250 metres. If there's only one contestant then the computer provides a pacer for you but for more than one the computer runs the contest in heats of two contestants. Unfortunately, if you haven't got a two joystick capability then one person must use the keyboard. Run straight against the clock, the person with the quickest time as shown below the track wins. Once again the overall winner is shown along with any new world records.

SKI JUMP

Onwards and upwards—this time to the top of the ski jump. Your character is represented quivering at the top of the ramp. Press fire and he/she launches quickly to the bottom where a quick jab on fire sends the skier into the air. Once there a small window on the right must be watched showing the player's position on the skis. Too far forward and a quick jab left will correct. Leaning back is corrected by pushing

right, crossed skis need a quick downward stroke and bent knees are straightened by an upward movement. If all the corrections are properly and speedily done then a distance figure is shown and not a tangle of skis. Then points are awarded taking into account the distance and the stylishness with which you achieved it.

Time to come indoors now and lace up your ice skates whilst the next section loads in. The music begins and first off it's . . .

FIGURE SKATING

Here you must execute seven compulsory moves during a one minute rendition of 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring' by Bach. Press fire and the band staggers into life, then, by using the joystick or keys seven moves of camel and sit spins, double and triple axels and lutzes (axel is a forward jump the lutz backward) and a camel into a sit spin, must be made in order to score points. As any skater would impart, you must be moving backwards in order to make a spin and if less than six are made then points are reduced for style. More than six and you'll get so dizzy you'll fall over and have the obligatory .7 points off whatever the present score is but don't worry too much! Nobody will give you a minus score even if more time is spent elegantly sliding along the ice on a wet bottom. A camel spin to a sit spin can be done however and is worth 1.2 points. Each movement is judged upon its successful completion and the style in which it was achieved which depends on when the fire button is pressed.

FREE SKATING

All the jumps are as above but there are two minutes in which to make three successful attempts of the seven moves. Points are awarded as for figure skating with the exception that although it's possible to accrue more than six points, this is all you can get.

BIATHLON

A mixture of skills are required in order to ski up, down and across terrain, and pausing to shoot at five targets with five cartridges. All the skiing you must do in order to arrive at the targets affects your heart rate and the higher it is the harder it is to aim. This event is scored on time with each missed target counting five seconds added onto your time. The winner is the person with the fastest time at the end of the course and receives as usual a gold medal although with all that snow a good stiff brandy would probably be more appropriate.

Presentation 83%
Definable keys are most helpful and there is a practice mode.

Graphics 90%
Some of the prettiest backdrops yet seen on the Amstrad.

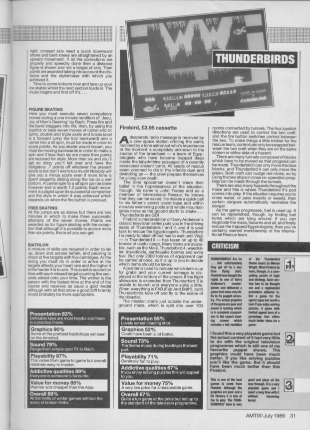
Sound 78%
Range from simple spot FX to Bach.

Playability 87%
This varies from game to game but overall relatively easy to master.

Addictive qualities 89%
Everyone is someone's favourite.

Value for money 85%
Warmer and cheaper than the Alps.

Overall 89%
All the thrills of winter games without the worry of broken limbs.



THUNDERBIRDS

Firebird, £3.95 cassette

A desperate radio message is received by a lone space station orbiting the earth; manned by a lone astronaut who's importance at the moment is completely unknown to the source of the broadcast — a team of Egyptologists who have become trapped deep inside the labyrinthine passages of a recently excavated ancient tomb. All seeds of rescue seem doomed to die in the infertile dust and dwindling air — the crew prepare themselves for a long slow death.

The lone spaceman doesn't share their belief in the hopelessness of the situation, though; his name is John Tracey and as a member of International Rescue, he knows that they can be saved. He makes a quick call to his father's secret island base and within minutes swimming pools and whole mountain sides move as the ground starts to shake . . . *Thunderbirds* are GO!

Firebird's interpretation of Gerry Anderson's classic television series puts you in the driving seats of Thunderbirds I and II, and it is your task to rescue the Egyptologists. Thunderbird I is ready to blast off but has to wait until Virgil — in Thunderbird II — has taken on up to 40 tonnes of useful cargo. Many items are available, such as the Mole, Thunderbird 4, weedkiller, insecticide, earthquake bombs and extra fuel. But only 2000 tonnes of equipment can be carried at once, so it is up to you to decide which items should be taken.

A pointer is used to indicate which item is up for grabs and your current tonnage is displayed at the bottom of the screen. If the flight allowance is exceeded then Thunderbird II is unable to launch and everyone sulks a little. When everything is FAB (Fab And Brill?), both Thunderbirds take off and fly to the scene of the disaster.

The mission starts just outside the underground maze, which is split into over 100 rooms connected by tunnels. The four joystick directions are used to control the two craft and the fire button switches control between the two. To make things a little trickier for the rescue team, control can only be swapped between the two craft when they are on the same screen or either side of a hazard.

There are many tunnels composed of blocks which have to be moved so that progress can be made. Thunderbird I can only move the blue blocks, and Thunderbird II can only move the green. Both craft can nudge red rocks, so by using the two ships in close co-operation progress can be made through the tunnels.

There are also many hazards throughout the maze and this is where Thunderbird II's pod comes into play. If the situation requires you to cross water, or pass insects or weeds, then certain cargoes automatically neutralise the danger.

As the game progresses, fuel is used up. It can be replenished, though, by finding fuel tanks which are lying around. If you can negotiate the maze, hazards and all, and finally rescue the trapped Egyptologists, then you've certainly earned membership of the International Rescue team.

Presentation 55%
Lovely screen loading shot.

Graphics 52%
Could have been a lot better.

Sound 73%
The theme music during loading is the best part.

Playability 71%
Generally fun to play.

Addictive qualities 67%
If you enjoy solving puzzles this will appeal to you.

Value for money 75%
A very low price for a reasonable game.

Overall 67%
Quite a fun game at the price but not up to the standard of the television programme.

CRITICISM

1 THUNDERBIRDS Are Go . . . But unfortunately they get off to a less than flying start. Firebird have bought the rights to one of Gerry Anderson's masterpieces and delivered a game that owes very little to its puppet ancestry. The actual graphics of the game are poor and sound is lacking which is in complete comparison to the superb loading screen which includes a full rendition of the Thunderbird theme music by Melvyn Wright. What Firebird do have, though, is a compelling puzzle of logic and strategy. Each section has to be thought out and a regimented procedure adhered to. Not a game for the sporty types but worth a look if you enjoy solving puzzles. A game with limited appeal born of a parentage that offers much better ideas for a game.

2 I found this a very playable game but the actual content of it had very little to do with the original television programme which is still one of my favourite puppet shows. The graphics could have been much better. If you like solving puzzles you'll like the game. But it should have been much better than this Firebird.

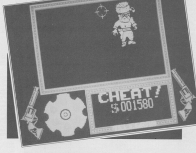
3 This is one of the best games to come from Firebird. Although the graphics are poor and a bit flickery it is lots of fun to play. The THUNDERBIRDS' tune is very good and plays all the way through. It is a very playable game and I spent a long time with it without becoming bored.

REVIEWS

GUNFRIGHT

Ultimate, £9.95 cassette





Hell hello thar an' welcome to town. Don't be gettin' any ideas about shootin' it up, 'cos we've got ourselves a new sheriff that cun shoot the fleas off a jack rabbit without burnin' its fer. His name — oh yeh, Sheriff Quickdraw.'

CRITICISM

1 This game has made quite a good transition from the Spectrum machine, but it has lost a bit of it's speed and gained a bit of colour. Unfortunately, the game was slow on the Spectrum anyway — the Amstrad version also has slow responses. The game itself is fun to play and I found that finding the outlaw could either be a very easy task or almost impossible, depending on how much you trusted the little gringos that point you in the right direction. The bonus screen is very jerky, but this doesn't affect the play much. The best bit about the game is the jingles and accompanying tunes — these are very well done and some of the best on the Amstrad. Ultimate have published a very good game, but could have polished it off a bit more.

2 **Ultimate are very consistent in producing good games and *Gunfright* is no exception. It has a very respectable tune and some decent FX, and this helped give the game lots of go. The colours and graphics are very good as shown by the loading screen. I found the game very entertaining and quite addictive, and worth the money.**

3 Ultimate goes West and comes up with an excellent program. I'm glad to see that Ultimate have made a switch from wierd monsters and settled for baddies in ponchos. The graphics are well defined and slick; the sound is very good, and generally Ultimate have kept up their consistent track record of excellent games. Maybe other companies should take note!

Sheriff Quickdraw is the archetypical hero of Ultimate's latest Amstrad release Gunfright. 'Filmed' in the 3D perspective of Night Shade Filmation II, Ultimate have brought the wild west to your screen. The menu offers the choice of one or two players and either joystick directional control or turn/movement control. You must first finance your war against the gunslingers as bullets and the like all cost a lot more nowadays!

On the first screen money bags drop from the top of the screen and must be shot using a cross hair sight and a fast trigger finger. Once this is done, an amount of cash is put into Quickdraw's account, where he can quickly draw money as his wild bills mount. A chamber of bullets slowly depletes as your six shooter fires, until it is empty. Fortunately, it automatically reloads.

Once the Sheriff has got some cash, a wanted poster appears giving the name, picture and bounty offered for a gunslinger. Coming out of the office to shoot hot lead in the general direction of the offender, he finds that his task is not going to be made easier by the local populace, who, instead of locking their doors and barring their windows in the time honoured tradition, are all roaming the streets. Strange! But even stranger is the fact they all seem to be women with beards — or are they men in skirts? Well, no matter. A collision with any of them proves fatal, but shooting them results in an on-the-spot fine. The fine increases on each screen and is shown in the telegram message window, along with the price of bullets and horses.

The gunslingers, being cowardly curs, don't come looking for a showdown, so it's up to the Sheriff to hunt them down. He must search the town until he finds where each varmint is. One of the local law-abiding inhabitants helps a little. He's the town runt who is occasionally seen leaping up and down and pointing in a direction. He's usually quite accurate with his tale-telling, but he sometimes gets it wrong. Lying to an officer of the law is an offence, but what can you do? If the Sheriff shoots him he only finds himself fined and the little snitch returns somewhere else as if nothing had happened.

The Sheriff can get around town faster by using one of the horses lying around — they don't stand around because they haven't got any legs! If the Sheriff leaps into the carefully cut hole in the middle of the horse's back, his legs appear at the bottom and he can run cheerfully around the town in half the time. He can also dispose of pedestrians by running into them! However, shooting a pedestrian still incurs a fine.

The gun totin' baddies are easily recognised: mean, bearded, dirty lookin' sons of . . . heck, they looks just like the Sheriff! Well they must be dangerous in that case. Don't touch them — just get them in your sights and shoot off a round to get their attention.

When the baddie's attention is captured, the screen changes and in time honoured tradition the Sheriff and the gunslinger have their showdown. The man with a price on his head appears on screen. His finger's itching to draw, and he's eager to put another notch on his gun and send a Sheriff to Boot Hill. Quickdraw must use the cross hair sight and quickly despatch the desperado before he prematurely retires from the law game.

Presentation 88%
Pretty loading screen and a one or two player option.

Graphics 89%
Slick and well defined.

Sound 85%
A very respectable tune and spot FX.

Playability 85%
Highly entertaining.

Addictive qualities 82%
Certainly grows on you.

Value for money 84%
Well worth the note and coins.

Overall 83%
A great Western game.

ENTER THE CHOCKS AWAY BIGGLES' FLYING COMPETITION AND WIN A BUMPER BAG OF GOODIES



As Uncle Malc relates to us all from time to time whilst in the corner of the Pig and Ball Bearings hostelry and on the windier side of a mountain of empty stout bottles, in the old days, standards were different. Heroes were just ordinary blokes who, like Biggles, didn't have to don bright silky underwear over skin tight leotards. No siree, in those days men were men and women lost their bonnets a lot.

If a real hero was needed then you'd call for someone like Biggles. Dressed very simply in his flying helmet, silk scarf and googles. Biggles would only have his skill and daring with which to fight the foe wherever they should raise their unsavoury visage. Yes Malcolm loves retelling the stories of do or die in which Biggles was involved.

And now, thanks to those dashed good guys and gals at **Mirrorsoft** it's now chocks away, contact and Tally Ho as our oil spotted hero takes to the sky in a desperate attempt to protect King and country in *Biggles* the computer game. Mirrorsoft, who are a well-known group of jolly old bricks, have turned W.E. Johns' hero into a computer game in which Biggles must destroy the enemy's new top secret sound weapon. To do this he must call on all his daring and flying skills in order to complete his mission which, due to a high tech time warp, takes place in 1917 and 1986. Poor old Biggsie, cast adrift in time. Mind you, the resourceful blighter shouldn't be that out of sorts because he didn't have any super powers to begin with!

What he does have is incredible charisma shown in the game of the film of the book (yes that's right) and the success he's enjoying at the moment. If you'd like to take a little share in Biggles' good fortune then the ever patient Pat at Mirrorsoft may have the right combination of Biggles memorabilia to spur you to heroics in the Biggles competition. **First prize is a copy of the game, a T-shirt, scarf, badge, stickers, and a signed picture of Neil Dickson, star of the Biggles film. There is also 25 runners-up prizes of a copy of the game and a Biggles T shirt so please state your chest size when you send in your entry.**

The competition itself could not be easier. All you have to do is to give the full names of Biggles' flying chums. Send your entry to **AMTIX! BIGGLES COMPETITION, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**, and make sure they arrive by Monday, 21 July.

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R IMAGINATION!

Screen shots taken from various computer formats



HEAVY ON THE MAGICK

Gargoyle Games, £9.95 cassette

ollowing an almighty argument with Therion, arch magician of Graumphery, Axil is sent into temporary exile to the dungeons beneath Collodon's Pile as his punishment. Somehow poor Axil must try and extricate himself from this predicament as dungeons aren't the nicest places to be stuck in at the best of times. Using your skill and ingenuity in this latest graphical adventure from Gargoyle, you must help Axil find his way out of the dungeons of Collodon's Pile and hopefully make him into a better magician at the same time.

Apart from being very dark and smelly the dungeons are also filled with an assortment of gothic monsters who are rather miffed at having their peace shattered by the blundering magician who has suddenly decided to take up temporary residence in their abode. Monsters are not known for their friendliness and these are no exception. Just as Axil is beginning to take stock of his surroundings lumbering great trolls or scurrying Goblins pop up. Seeing how their new neighbour is settling in, they ain't and usually they want little more than to attack Axil with great zeal and enthusiasm. At this point Axil can either run for it or stand firm and fight like a man. Success in the ensuing battle depends on how strong the opponent is. If the monster's stamina levels are significantly higher than Axil's, then the fight is likely to end in tears. However, if the two of them are quite evenly matched then Axil can usually finish the monster off with a few blast spells, provided he has had the foresight to pick up the magic book of Grinoire on his travels around the dungeons.

Axil starts out with very little magical skill, so goodness knows why he's called Axil the Able. During the game it is your duty to enlarge on his repertoire of spells so that if and when he manages to get out he can give Therion some of his own medicine for a change. Every time Axil finds another page of the Grinoire Bumper Book of Spells his skill levels increase and he gradually rises upwards through the ranks of the supernatural.

Dungeons are also very messy places and the floor is littered with objects. Some of these are useful and must be collected by Axil so that he can gain access to other parts of the dungeon. Objects can be examined, picked-up, or dropped depending on whether you think Axil needs them in order to get out. Some, however have been booby-trapped, and might be covered with poison. Picking up one of these doctored objects causes him to utter a piercing scream which means you had better tell him to drop it soon or else he is going to die.

The language in *Heavy on the Magick* is a form of broken English known as Merphish. All communications in the game are typed in via the middle window at the bottom of the screen. Merphish is easy to learn. It consists of typing in the keyword followed by a command. Usually this is obeyed, but it may also be ignored, largely depending on who you are talking to.

At the beginning of the game, Axil is given certain quantities of stamina, luck and experience. These amounts can be swapped around if you think that luck is more important than skill, or skill is more important than stamina. The levels are shown throughout the game at the bottom of the main screen. The stamina levels go down with every monster encounter and the skill levels rise with every new experience and spell added to Axil's remarkably spacious pouch. If his stamina levels drop too low then he dies.

A full record of Axil's progress can be monitored on the windows at the bottom of the screen. The first window shows the available exits and whether there are any nasty monsters approaching. It also provides a quick description of any new room entered. The middle window is used for typing in the game commands and the last window shows what reserves Axil has left as well as how much stamina, skill and cunning any encountered monster possesses. Using this chart it's possible to determine whether to blast a monster or run away.

Axil moves around the dungeons by following whatever directions are typed into the middle window, as long as there's an exit that way, otherwise he gives you a bemused shrug and looks worried.

The basic idea of the game is to logically work out how to get Axil the Able out of the maze that makes up Collodon's Pile before the various monsters eat him up for afternoon tea on the patio.

1 There are some very nice touches in this game such as those moments when Axil shrugs if he can't find his way out of a room or when the trolls laugh after killing you. It's very playable but quite frustrating to try and complete the entire game. The graphics are nice and large and the various screens hold plenty of surprises. As with most offerings from Gargoyle Games I expect that I'd have to play it a great deal before I got really sick and tired with the sight of it.

2 **Followers of Gargoyle's previous graphic adventures will almost certainly want this one, not just because they'll want a new set of 'Follis/Carter' witty puzzles, but because it's quite different from *Dun Darach* or *Marsport* both in approach and certainly in feeling. For those who had any doubts about the previous two, *Heavy on the Magick* is worth taking a look at for the same reasons. If anything this version is even better than the Spectrum edition for it is well represented all round even down to good character movement. The language is difficult to use at first but soon works out reasonably easy. The game comes in a well designed package containing clear instructions which could hardly have been better. A really excellent game for your micro.**

3 HEAVY ON THE MAGICK is a strange twist on the normal adventure, in that this will appeal to some Amsters of the arcade variety. The game is well presented and easy to get into, which means that you don't get stuck in the first few locations. The instructions are very comprehensive but not too hard to read. I was very impressed with the vocabulary aspect of the game, the control of your character is very easy and I found stringing the commands together is very useful if you know where you're going. HEAVY ON THE MAGICK is a very interesting game which is well worth a look.

Presentation 89%
Good packaging, clear instructions and instantly appealing looks on screen with novel control method.

Graphics 88%
Nice and large with lots of surprises and a very different look to the usual.

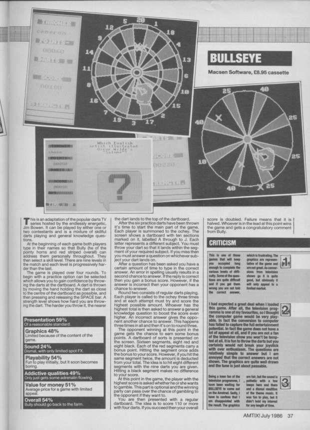
Sound 75%
Pleasant loading tune with jolly spot FX.

Playability 87%
Easy to get into and entertaining.

Addictive qualities 86%
The exploring approach combined with the Grinoire of Gargoylisms hold your attention.

Value for money 85%
Slightly above average price for an excellent game.

Overall 87%
A great game for anyone who, with a sense of humour, likes an adventure with a difference.



BULLSEYE

Macsen Software, £8.95 cassette

This is an adaptation of the popular darts TV series hosted by the endlessly energetic, Jim Bowen. It can be played by either one or two contestants and is a mixture of skillful darts playing and general knowledge questions.

At the beginning of each game both players type in their names so that Bully (he of the pointy horns and red striped overall) can address them personally throughout. They then select a skill level. There are nine levels in the match and each level is progressively harder than the last.

The game is played over four rounds. To begin with a practice option can be selected which allows you to gain confidence by throwing the darts at the dartboard. A dart is thrown by moving the hand holding the dart as close to the centre of the dartboard as possible, and then pressing and releasing the SPACE bar. A strength level shows how hard you are throwing the dart. The harder you throw it, the nearer the dart lands to the top of the dartboard.

After the six practice darts have been thrown it's time to start the main part of the game. Each player is summoned to the ochey. The screen shows a dartboard with ten sections marked on it, labelled A through to J. Each letter represents a different subject. You must throw your dart so that it lands within the segment of your required subject. If you miss then you must answer a question on whichever subject your dart lands on.

After a question has been asked you have a certain amount of time to type in the correct answer. An error in spelling usually results in a second chance to answer. If the reply is correct then you gain a bonus score. However, if the answer is incorrect then your opponent has a chance to answer.

Round two consists of regular darts playing. Each player is called to the ochey three times and at each attempt must try and score the highest possible amount. Whoever has the highest total is then asked to answer a general knowledge question to boost the score even higher. An incorrect answer gives the opponent another chance to answer. This happens three times in all and then it's on to round three.

The opponent winning at this point in the game gets the chance to earn some bonus points. A dartboard of sorts is presented on the screen. Sixteen segments, eight red and eight black. Each of the red segments carry a bonus point. Hitting the segment once adds the bonus to your score. However, if you hit the same segment twice, the amount is deducted from your total. The idea is to hit eight different segments with the nine darts you are given. Hitting a black segment makes no difference to your score.

At this point in the game, the player with the highest score is asked whether he or she wants to gamble. This part is optional and the winning party can pass over the chance of gambling to the opponent if they want to.

You are then presented with a regular dartboard. The idea is to score 110 or more with four darts. If you succeed then your overall score is doubled. Failure means that it is halved. Whoever is in the lead at this point wins the game and gets a congratulatory comment from Bully.

Presentation 59%
Of a reasonable standard.

Graphics 48%
Limited because of the content of the game.

Sound 24%
Dismal, with only limited spot FX.

Playability 54%
Fun to play initially, but it soon becomes boring.

Addictive qualities 49%
Only just gets some adrenalin flowing.

Value for money 51%
Average price for a game with limited appeal.

Overall 54%
Bully should go back to the farm.

CRITICISM

1 This is one of those games that will keep you occupied long enough to complete the various levels of difficulty. Some of the questions are quite difficult and if you get them wrong you are not told the correct answer, which is frustrating. The graphics are representative of the game and are not great. As conversions from television shows go it is quite good, but obviously it will only appeal to a limited market.

2 I had expected a great deal when I loaded this game. After all, the television programme is one of my favourites, so I thought the computer game would be very playable. In fact the conversion to computer has failed to capture the full entertainment potential. In fact the game does not have a lot of appeal at all, and if you are not a fan of the television show you won't be tempted at all. It is fun to throw the darts but you certainly would not break your joystick with over enthusiasm. The questions are relatively simple to answer but I am annoyed that the correct answers are not shown. The graphics are quite well drawn and the tune is just about passable.

3 Being a keen fan of the television programme, I have been waiting for BULLSEYE to come out on the Amstrad. Sadly, I have to confess that I am disappointed with the result. The graphics are fair, but the sound is pathetic with a few beeps here and there and a dismal rendition of the theme music. It was fun to play, but it didn't hold my interest for any length of time.

KNIGHTS AT THE OFFICE

DAVID PAUL checks out a game of chess on the Joyce and decides it's a most enjoyable program



Most popular business computers are capable of playing adventure and strategy games and now that the PCW 8256 and PCW 8512 have established themselves in the business field there will be a growing list of software which, whilst not strictly designed for serious applications, is a lot more fun to use.

CP Software are one of the first to introduce a strategy game specifically for the Amstrad PCW range and, in keeping with the business micro tradition by which office computers have to prove their superiority over mere humans, it is a chess game.

EXPERIENCE

The programmers have considerable experience in designing and marketing successful chess programs and this is shown in their PCW 8256/8512 offering *3D Clock Chess* created in consultation with International Grandmaster and chess book author Jon Speelman. *3D Clock Chess* runs under CP/M and takes up a large amount of memory — you cannot load the program into the 128K of the CPC 6128 after CP/M has been installed.

Designed with Joyce's green screen monitor in mind the graphics are beautifully done, all play takes place on a three dimensional board and there is no option of switching to a 2D diagram display. In addition to the chess board there is a three dimensional clock to the top left of the screen, make your move and the clock button on your side of the board is depressed by an unseen hand to start your opponent's clock. When the computer makes its move the other button sinks and your chess clock starts to tick away. There is also an analogue time display at the top centre of the screen showing the move time and total time for both White and Black.

The pieces are moved by entering co-ordinates, to move the White King's pawn two squares forward for example means keying in **E2-E4**. Club chess players and enthusiasts would have no difficulty with this but for others it could slow them down — and increase their clock time! A helpful feature is provided here, just tap the right key and the board co-ordinates appear. There are no playing levels as such, just set the time in seconds from 5 to 999 (16 minutes) and the computer averages this time for each of its moves, the more time it is allowed, the stronger is its game.

You can turn the board around to play as black, force the computer to make the next move, ask for a recommended move or demonstration and change the set move time. The program lacks a take — back feature which students of chess opening theory find useful. Set at the minimum level of 5 seconds the program played a reasonable game — enough to make most people think! Using the usual ploy against chess programs and taking it 'out of book' led the computer into an unfavourable position when set at or near the minimum time per move. Set at higher time limits but still well below the chess club tournament level of three minutes per move the program plays a strong game.

THINKING PROGRAM

If requested the program will show you its 'thinking' process and the move it likes best. Using the 3D clock it is possible to play five minute or 'blitz chess', if the time limit is exceeded the game is lost. Unfinished games can be saved to disk and up to 62 previous moves can be displayed, a screen dump is easily obtained and looks very pleasing on the PCW printer. Problems up to mate in four can be set up by selecting Analysis mode. The setting up of problems is often a problem itself for chess computer programs or dedicated chess computers, here *3D Clock Chess* does very well, all you have to do is to key in the co-ordinates of the desired square followed by the initial of the piece or pawn you want to place there and respond to the query (W/B)? for colour. A single square can easily be altered and clearing the board is done by a single key press There are enough features here to make this a very enjoyable program for most chess players. A nice touch is the option to turn the beep signal at each move on or off, switch it off, adjust the position of the monitor and everyone else at the office will think you are word-processing! *3D Clock Chess is published by* ***CP Software*** *for the PCW 8256/8512 at £19.95.*

BLUNDERS

Even the World Chess Champions have been known to make blunders so AMTIX! can consider itself in good company. The diagram for **Problem 1** in last month's review of *Colossus* and *Cyrus* chess not only had the wrong text but appeared with Queens instead of Kings! Even your faithful Amstrad would cash in its chips trying to solve that chess problem.
The correct solution — which was solved by *Colossus*, appeared with the diagram for the second problem (white plays f7 followed by f8 and promotes to bishop, then white cannot be prevented from playing Nf6 and Bg7 mate.) In the second diagram a mix-up of Kings and Queens also caused the difficulty. The black king should be located at f4, the white king at h6 and the white queen at h1.
All the other pieces were located in the correct position and the black queen is off the board. The solution, which was printed above with diagram 1 in error, (Qh1 - c1) is correct. Apologies to chess players everywhere — I'm waiting for someone to write in stating their computer had no difficulty in solving the problems!

Roger Hargreaves' famous Mr Men characters seem to pop up on everything these days from the crockery on the breakfast table to the labels on the food packets.

These strange but lovable characters appeal to the young — and they can be used to help children in the early years providing that the book, game, etc, is well thought out. Parents of young children of pre-school age and up to the age of seven years who own an Amstrad CPC could find *First*

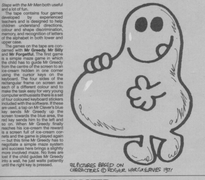
DAVID PAUL takes an educational delve into

FUN WITH THE MR MEN

Steps with the Mr Men both useful and a lot of fun.

The tape contains four games developed by experienced teachers and is designed to help children understand directions, colour and shape discrimination, memory, and recognition of letters of the alphabet in both lower and upper case.

The games on the tape are concerned with **Mr Greedy**, **Mr Silly** and **Mr Forgetful**. The first game is a simple maze game in which the child has to guide Mr Greedy from the centre of the screen to an ice-cream hidden in one corner using the cursor keys on the keyboard. The four sides of the rectangular frame on screen are each of a different colour and to make the task easy for very young computer enthusiasts there is a set of four coloured keyboard stickers included with the software. If these are used, a tap on Mr Clever's blue key sends Mr Greedy up the screen towards the blue area, the red key sends him to the left and so on. When Mr Greedy finally reaches his ice-cream the reward is a screen full of ice-cream cornets and the game is played again — but this time Mr Greedy has to negotiate a simple maze system and success here brings a slightly more involved maze. No lives are lost if the child guides Mr Greedy into a wall, he just waits patiently until the right key is pressed.



The second game, *Mr Silly's Hat Game* involves the recognition of shapes and colour to help Mr Silly select a hat identical to the one shown on the screen bottom left from six shelves of assorted hats. Again, the cursor key stickers can be used.

The third and fourth games on the reverse of the tape are concerned with Mr Forgetful. In the *Wardrobe Game* Mr Forgetful has to find a matching pair of socks, skates or shoes from a set of wardrobes each containing one item. The problem here is that only one door remains open so that some memory recall is needed. The fourth game, *Mr Forgetful's Letter Game*, is a variation of the wardrobe game except that letters in either upper or lower case have to be matched into pairs.

A small book for reading to young children is included with the software and there are easy instructions enabling parents to select the letters of their own choice for the letter game. This approach is good — for the value of a program such as this depends upon the amount of adult involvement with the child. Although playable on a green screen monitor the use of colour adds considerably to the value of the program.

First Steps With the Mr Men is published by **Mirrorsoft** for the Amstrad CPC range at £8.95 on tape.

THE GERMAN MASTER

The current summertime preoccupation with internal and external school examinations leads to a frantic rush in some quarters for revision material. Many bookstores and computer software dealers organised their shop displays early this year and there wass a wide range to choose from — not all of it useful.

Kosmos Software has produced a range of language learning software programs designed for secondary school pupils (and adults) which is helpful yet remarkably simple in concept, fast, flexible and easy to use. The programs are not examination revision programs but are designed to help in the learning and checking of words and phrases in several languages.

Depending upon the program selected you can test vocabulary and phrases in French, German or Spanish or use the program to design your own test — a homework list for example can very easily be transferred to computer using this program.

On loading the program you are presented with a menu of nine options, these enable you to choose any of the sixteen lesson files, eg Family, Weather, Months and Seasons, to make additions or deletions to the lesson or to make up a test of your own.

If you decide to run one of the lesson files, simply select that option from the main menu and respond to the screen prompts. You can decide to enter either the German or English first, alter the time that the words are displayed on the screen and to indicate if you want the lesson to be automatically repeated.

There is a help facility in each test, just tapping the right key on the keyboard makes the computer show the first letter of the word you are wracking your memory for, a second tap gives the second letter and so on. At the end of each session the results screen shows the number of times you have asked for help as well as the time taken and score.

Creating new lessons is simply a matter of selecting that option from the main menu and entering your words or phrases and their translations when asked by the screen prompts. Up to a maximum of 200 entries can be stored and saved to tape or disk for loading again with the main program.

There are no graphics ,sound effects, or other distractions in this program — but it works very well, and users found it enjoyable. In the same series as *The German Master*, Kosmos software also publish *The French Mistress* and *The Spanish Tutor*.

The German Master is published by **Kosmos Software** for any Amstrad CPC computer at £8.95 (tape) or £12.95 (disk) for Levels A or B. A disk combining both levels A and B is available for £19.95.



A Thank you to **David Parker** of Stockwood, Bristol for a copy of his 12K tape based database program which I hope to look at in greater detail in the near future. A quick 'see if it will load on this tape-deck' check-out showed a program into which a lot of time and effort has gone. There must be a lot of talent out there! Programs to: **DAVID PAUL, AMTIX! MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.**



CP/M THE SOFTWARE BUS

By A Clarke, J M Eaton, and D Powys-Lybbe, £7.95, Sigma

CP/M is not just a widely-used operating system, it was one of the first attempts at standardisation and helped to make computing more widespread. This book is the ultimate reference for anyone who wants to do more than simply use FILECOPY or DISKCOPY. It provides the kind of information which is needed to get the most out of CP/M in a readable and understandable form.

Most people know that <Control>m and **C** means re-boot or restart CP/M but how many know the 10 or so associated commands? For example, **Ctrl S** stops the screen scrolling temporarily (until any key is pressed). The book is packed with these kinds of details, which individually may be mundane, but collectively add up to a very powerful grasp of the operating system which was the precursor to IBM's PC-DOS.

The book has 18 chapters, a history of CP/M leads on to the 'Console Command Processor' which handles all keyboard input. Then come four chapters dealing with some of the standard programs (or transients) such as **STAT** and **PIP**. Two chapters deal with CP/M assemblers and monitors which allow the creation of **.COM** files which will run on any of the hundreds of machines which have Z80 or 8080-type processors. Then comes a long chapter on high-level languages which compile to CP/M code. No attempt is made to suggest which language is suitable for any particular task, instead every single compiler and run-time error message is listed, with details of what they mean. This is in keeping with the rest of the book: lots of information concerning the relationship between the subject (eg programming languages) and CP/M, and no wasted space.

The tenth chapter deals with text editors, from the free *Ed* to the not so free *Wordstar*. *Ed* is very powerful, with macros of commands which can be repeated until end of file, or a particular string, is reached. Unfortunately, the Amstrad manual does not list the commands available, thus making *Ed* unusable unless you have this book.

CP/M has two major parts; the BIOS (Basic input/output system) is different on each machine and actually controls the hardware. The BDOS (Basic Disk Operating System) is the standard front-end which is accessed by the program. Both these parts are well covered, as are memory maps and hardware control. A short chapter deals with patching CP/M to a new machine, so anybody can get into the CP/M world. A chapter on networked and multi-user versions of CP/M is followed by one on the 8086 16-bit processor which is the basis of the IBM PC family.

Creating a version of CP/M to run on a 16 bit coprocessor alongside an 8 bit main chip is dealt with in some detail, and gives the authors yet another chance to show that what they don't know about CP/M isn't worth knowing. The final chapter is on bug-fixes from Digital Research. Most of these fixes have already been carried out on the versions of CP/M which come with an Amstrad.

In summary this book aims to be a programmer's companion and succeeds, but it will also be very useful to any sophisticated user of CP/M ot someone who wants to become such a user. There are quite a few minor typographical errors but the meaning is always clear and at the price, for over 300 pages, *CP/M — The Software Bus* is worth buying for anyone with CP/M 2.2 or CP/M Plus.

Michael Jampel

PRACTICAL C

By Mark Harrison, £7.95, Sigma

Practical C is a high level language in the mould of Pascal. It allows modular, structured programming, and can be compiled to produce efficient machine code. This book is aimed at someone with limited experience of other languages, and provides a useful introduction to the concepts behind C and the logic required to get the most from it. Prerequisites, such as knowledge of hexadecimal numbers, are dealt with very clearly. Subsequent chapters deal with data types (character, integer, etc) and arrays.

One of the major ideas in Practical C concerns pointers. Whereas something like matrix (1,4) contains a piece of data stored in an array, *matrix (1,4) contains the address in memory at which that data is located. Thus subroutines can be called with pointers to variables, as opposed to the variables themselves. Some functions will only operate on pointers, and as the book rightly points out, understanding this area is one of the keys to C. Quite a lot of space is spent on pointers but I have not been left with a real understanding of when to use them, nor even why they are necessary. This is one of the major faults of the book.

The 173 page, paperback book contains four other chapters, the first of these dealing with pre-processor commands, that is commands to the compiler which will not be present in the final code. Then comes a description of libraries of functions, which are very important in structural programs. These two topics are covered well, as is the introduction to data structures. The idea of linked lists of data is clearly explained, and begins to show the importance of pointers. Unfortunately, the mechanics of creating a linked structure is not made clear.

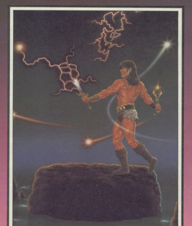
The final chapter deals with advanced input/output, and shows how use can be made of the Amstrad's graphic capabilities. Like the rest of the book, this is illustrated by lots of example functions and programs. The book is good in that it gives the reader the basis of quite complicated programs. Finally there are three appendices on the libraries of functions out of which programs are built up. One of the main ideas in the theory of structured programming is that it is pointless to re-invent the wheel, thus standard functions, such as sounding a bleeper, are put into libraries. In the end a good program will simply be a list of subroutines or functions to be called in turn. Certain of the examples in the book are marked, to tell the reader to put them into a special library, which is used throughout the book.

The front cover is adorned with the words 'Approved by Hisoft' and throughout the book reference is made to Hisoft C Compiler for the Amstrad and Spectrum. This program costs about £30 and can take advantage of all the Amstrad's features, as opposed to the more usual compilers costing hundreds of pounds, which are not machine specific. So it is fair the book is aimed at Hisoft users but one does get the impression the author has a vested interest. He says 'Floating point numbers are not supported by the Hisoft compiler' but does not actually mention how terrible this is. It means very very limited mathematics can be used in your program and this is a major fault! Similarly, the list of other books which might be useful only contain work published by Sigma. Thus the whole book gives the impression of being for the benefit of Hisoft, Sigma, and last (and perhaps least) the customer!

That fault apart, and the one concerning pointers, this book achieves its aims, and is very useful for the beginner who already has a C compiler. This is not the book for an assessment of which version of C is the best for any particular use. And I must not forget the usual complaint that almost £8 is too much for a paperback of only 170 pages.

Michael Jampel

MANDRAGORE



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AMTIX! TOP TWENTY FOR JULY

Here it is. The latest Top 20 Chart as voted by AMTIX! readers. The figures in parenthesis are last month's position.

1 *(1)* YIE AR KUNG FU Imagine
78,938,670 Tim Gurney, Meliden, Prestatyn

2 *(-)* SPINDIZZY Activision
201,818 Daryl Ward, Wigston, Leics

3 *(4)* ELITE Firebird
358,733.9 CR (Elite status) Murray Pope, West Linton

4 *(3)* SORCERY PLUS Virgin Games
131,940 Jeremy Fenn, Stamford, Lincs

5 *(7)* WHO DARES WINS 11 Alligata
568,700 Stephen Wheatley, Worcester

6 *(2)* WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST Melbourne House
9,920,197 Michael Nicholson, Peterlee, County Durham

7 *(5)* BRUCE LEE US Gold
5,265,250 Andrew J Gibson Pemberton, Wigan

8 *(17)* SPELLBOUND Mastertronic
100% completed, Stephen D Wise, Dedworth, Windsor

9 *(-)* 3D GRAND
2097 Paulo Anaia, Fulham, London

15 *(-)* WAY OF THE TIGER Gremlin Graphics
Completed, 12 bits of inner force left, Martin Jones, Bushey Heath, Hertfordshire

13 *(-)* GET DEXTER PSS/ERE
130,500 Paul Mountford, Blackpool

12 *(8)* CAU
Completed, J Mason, Sh

11 *(-)* HYPERSPORTS Imagine
211,295 David Cobane, Wythenshawe, Manchester

10 *(-)* SWE
10 brownies Paul Bus

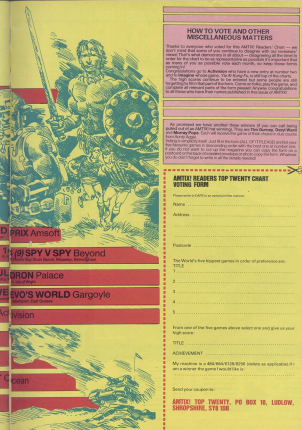
16 *(14)* BARRY MCGUIGAN'S BOXING Ac
16,417,000 T W Li, Birkenhead, Merseyside

17 *(10)* RAMBO Ocean
217,650 Keith J Passingham, Portsmouth, Hants

18 *(-)* DEFEND OR DIE Alligata
3,176,210 Maurice Small, Chinnor, Oxon

19 *(16)* DALEY THOMPSON'S SUPERTEST
8,625,860 Michael Stewart, Pensby, Wirral

20 *(-)* PING PONG Imagine
17,450 T W Li, Birkenhead



D PRIX Amsoft

14 (9) SPY V SPY Beyond
7 Master Spy Druin Burch, Moseley, Birmingham

UL DRON Palace
n, Isle of Wight

VE EVO'S WORLD Gargoyle
Newhaven, East Sussex

Activision

Ocean

HOW TO VOTE AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Thanks to everyone who voted for this AMTIX! Readers' Chart — we don't mind that some of you continue to disagree with our reviewers' views! That's what democracy is all about — disagreeing all the time! In order for the chart to be as representative as possible it's important that as many of you as possible vote each month, so keep those forms coming in!

Congratulations go to **Activision** who have a new entry at number two and to **Imagine** whose game, *Yie Ar Kung Fu*, is still top of the charts.

The high scores continue to be entered but some people are still forgetting to fill in that part of the form. Come on folks, play the game, and complete all relevant parts of the form please!! Anyway congratulations to all those who have their names published in this issue of AMTIX!

As promised we have another three winners (if you can call being pulled out of an AMTIX! hat winning). They are **Tim Gurney**, **Daryl Ward** and **Murray Pope**. Each will receive the game of their choice in due course from Aunty Aggie.

Voting is simplicity itself. Just fill in the form (ALL OF IT PLEASE) and list your five favourite games in descending order with the best one at number one. If you do not want to cut up the magazine you can copy the form on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope or photo copy the form. Whatever you do don't forget to write in all the details needed!

AMTIX! READERS TOP TWENTY CHART VOTING FORM

Please write in CAPS in an eyestrain free manner.

Name ....

Address ....

....

....

Postcode ....

The World's five hippest games in order of preference are:

TITLE

1 ....

2 ....

3 ....

4 ....

5 ....

From one of the five games above select one and give us your high score:

TITLE ....

ACHIEVEMENT ....

My machine is a 464/664/6128/8256 (delete as applicable).If I am a winner the game I would like is:

....

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STRATEGY

DISCLAIMING THE NAME OF THE GAME

Two excellent games for your delectation this month. Buy them both if you can. They are perfect examples of how to make strategy games exciting and fun, whilst both are have a high degree of authenticity. With these new titles we've also modified the style a little. The comment in shaded text after the main review has been added to give a better idea of the flow of play. It isn't intended so much as a comment on the game's worth as a specific example of play.

The writer of these touching remarks is Mark Peters, one of our budding contributors who has begun to express an interest in the genre. His comments therefore are intended to be akin to a 'beginner's' view. It also means that if you disagree with anything in that box, you can't shout at me. Have fun.

DESERT RATS

CCS, £9.95, cassette

Mr R T Smith won acclaim for his last game, *Arnhem*. His latest work, *Desert Rats*, outclasses the former in terms of both scale and quality. The former depicts a single battle, massive though it was in terms of the men and equipment deployed by both sides. Now Mr Smith has returned with a truly massive game covering the history of the North African campaign in a series of scenarios which range from a seven turn introductory game based on the British Battleaxe offensive to a six hundred and twenty four turn game depicting the conflict from Rommel's arrival in the Spring of 1941 up to his departure at the end of 1942.

There are no skill levels as such, but the matter of game complexity is dealt with in an innovative way related to the status of Malta. There are three different ways Malta's importance can be portrayed. The first is the historical setting, where Malta is used successfully by the British to increase their own supplies and cut off those of the enemy. The second, Operation Herkules, assumes that the Axis forces capture Malta and as a result their supply levels increase greatly during the latter half of 1942. The third option does not allow the British to use Malta — or assumes that Axis suppression was severe enough to negate the advantages offered by Malta — thus constantly increasing supplies reach the Axis forces.

The game can be played by one or two players, and in the one player game the computer can play either side. As usual, the excellent rules book is crammed with historical notes as if the author is urging you to test the validity of his game. Indeed, the booklet often provides an insight to good strategy and is worth reading even by those familiar with the historical context as a whole, because the information it contains is so relevant to the scenarios presented.

The British player orders his forces first, with the Axis player following. Movement and subsequent combat are handled simultaneously once both sides have issued their instructions and play proceeds to the next turn. Reports are always available and the same variety of combat and movement modes as those found in Arnhem are employed successfully here.

Apart from the standard move/fight options available to a unit, the British player has the option to GO TO PORT at the rate of one unit per turn. The order allows British units to travel from Tobruk to Alexandria, or vice-versa, as long as Tobruk remains held by British forces.

Units are mainly in the form of brigades, battalions and HQs. Italian units are only depicted as divisions. Unit symbols are clearly marked for easy identification and each side has different representative colours. For those using monochrome monitors, Axis and Allied forces have opposite facing units and British units are also shown in outline.

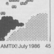
The screen consists of four areas. The largest of these shows the map of the region over which the battles were fought. A smaller window shows the date and time (the game is not 'real-time' however). There is also a dual purpose window displaying order options and messages and finally, another window displays the identity of the unit currently being ordered.

Stacking rules are also employed, allowing balanced groups of units to make concentrated moves upon the enemy. Incidentally, as losses are inflicted on units, they may actually change their designation and become parts of other units — but such things are handled in a fairly straightforward manner so as not to burden players with too much irrelevant detail.

Logistics play an important part in the game. Various kinds of movement and attack orders deplete the supplies of units to varying degrees. The supply rules in this game are the most complex I've dealt with for some time. Unless attention is paid to the depletion of units' supplies, you will soon find yourself up a proverbial gum tree!

Although the game plays in a





similar fashion to Arnhem, it is reassuring to see that the author has decided not to rest on the laurels of his previous creation and has modified the rules system so the actual battle sequences play faster and yet more confusingly to add realism. The effect works well and enhances the feeling of tension prevalent throughout the game.

There are six scenarios in all. The first five are in chronological order whereas the last one attempts to cover the entire campaign. To be honest, there was no way that this last scenario could be played in time for the review schedule but from playing the others, I can only say that it looks very tempting indeed. To play the campaign to its conclusion would undoubtedly require several sessions at the computer. To master this game would probably require even more time. The only way to win the scenario is to destroy all the opposing units. At the same time, your own losses must be kept low. This is the only major point of contention I have with the game. As the author himself points out in the historical notes, the Axis powers withdrew before they suffered total annihilation and even then, inflicted massive losses on the Allies during the campaign. The other scenarios however, each have their own victory conditions and all of these reflect the difficulty of the actual situations.

One other area, not so much an inaccuracy as an omission, is the lack of airpower on either side. This can be accounted for, however, when you consider that rarely did the RAF or Luftwaffe have any decisive affect on engagements, and as the author himself reminds us in the designer's notes, there were some limitations imposed by the lack of memory — an incredible amount is packed into the game.

But this does lead me to the final point. Whilst the game excels in some areas, I feel that Mr Smith may have bitten off more than he can chew. It may seem unfair to say this as the author is evidently a most capable programmer and a dedicated military historian. But the designer's notes are full of excuses for the things he couldn't put in — all because of the limitations of the computer rather than his limitations as a programmer. Spectrum owners now have a 128K version to make up for this but whether the same thing will happen on the Amstrad is not known.

What Desert Rats does offer is a massive game that strives to retain every historical point of accuracy despite limitations and ever present compromises. Let's hope that CCS take advantage of an expanded version soon.

A PLAYER'S VIEW

I took up the scenario of operation Battleaxe which involves use of the separate tank forces. The events took place over 15 to 21 June but it is possible to play for longer once this period has elapsed over game time.

Most of your forces are situated between Bardia and Tobruk with your HQ at Alexandria. Most of the units require repositioning and stacking, something which eats up a fair few moves. The Alexandria unit needs to be moved early on along with support — otherwise they will run out of supplies and leave you in deep trouble at the worst possible moment, becoming useless until much later in the game.

Early combat seems to leave your units largely unscathed but on your last turn, you may find strength dissipating rapidly. Most units will at least retain high levels of supply even after being betean in combat, leaving you with the flexibility to make the best of a bad situation should you need to.

Though intended as an introductory scenario, it's still difficult to win. Problems both logistical and in terms of comparative strengths make this enough of a challenge to occupy experienced and novice players alike.

Presentation 91%
Graphics 77%
Complexity 75%
Authenticity 90%
Lastability 89%
Value for money 88%
Overall 88%

BATTLEFIELD GERMANY

Cybercom Enterprises, £8.95 cassette, £13.95 disk

Perhaps a few readers out there are addicts of White Dwarf. One or two of these people may remember the excellent article on the Secret Service in TRAVELLER written by Robert McMahon. Some people may have heard of his respected RPG fanzine Alien Star. Now Mr McMahon has turned his talents in a new direction with Cybercom Enterprises. The result: probably the best wargame released on the Amstrad to date.

Battlefield Germany is a strategic simulation of conventional warfare in the European theatre. It may be played as a two player game or solitaire. However, there is no nuclear option in the solitaire game. The computer can play either NATO or the Warsaw Pact forces in a solitaire game. Assuming the computer plays the Warsaw Pact forces, the Nato player can select the relative strength of NATO on a scale from 1-9. A strength of 5 is average. The length of game may be either 6 or 12 turns. Incidentally, I played the 6 turn games which lasted a good five hours each.

All these options are followed by the title screen of the game. The fact that this is one of the exquisitely designed screens I've seen just goes to show that software from small companies can aspire to and reach extremely high standards throughout.

The main display has four sections. A message window across the top displays the turn number, player, phase and current victory point level. By examining the victory point level, any of three types of victory may be achieved by either side; marginal, major or total. Below this and to the right is the map of Europe. Countries are colour coded along with units and the cursor is shown as a flashing pixel. The main part of the screen shows an expanded part of the map in a 11 x 11 hex map. Hex movement is the most realistic in wargames. At the bottom right of the screen is the data display, showing details of any unit in the same hex as the cursor.

Terrain is clearly displayed leaving the map with a neat, uncluttered look. Rivers may be crossed at extra cost but sea or neutral countries' hexes are most definitely verboten. Neutral hexes are shown in strongly contrasting colours to emphasise their impassibility.

The game begins in the action phase of the Soviet player turn. This means that the enemy may attack and move with as many units as it sees fit. The only response the NATO player may make is defensive combat and retreats when necessary. This phase is followed by the NATO supply and action phases. Technically, the supply phase is the first stage of a turn. This is handled automatically for both sides. The computer calculates the level of resupply to each unit and introduces any allowable reinforcements on the extreme western or eastern edges of the map, depending on who is eligible for the new units.

After this is the action phase, where all movement and attack combat is carried out. This is a simple process. When the cursor appears over a unit symbol, the unit or units (up to four units may be stacked in a hex) are displayed on the right hand side of the screen. The unit ID, combat strength, Movement points, supply level, fatigue level and efficiency of each unit is displayed in an easy to read fashion. All these factors are taken into account during combat (along with terrain modifiers). A plus or minus sign is displayed to show whether a unit is currently selected for movement and if the combat strength is displayed in orange (instead of white) it means that unit has either attacked or been attacked and therefore may not engage in combat until the next turn.

A stack marker means that cer-



tain units in a single hex may be given orders while others are ignored. Up to four units may co-exist in a hex. On the main map, units appear colour coded in diagramatic form for easy ID. They also have little pointers to indicate how many units are stacked with them.

Combat is a simple process. Units involved in the attack move into hexes adjacent to the target unit. The cursor is then positioned over the target unit and the A key pressed. A message 'select attacking units' appears. Directional keys pick out hexes with units that qualify for attack and the unit selection key is pressed for each one participating. When enough units have been selected, another key confirms the attack. If no units have been selected when this key is pressed, the attack is aborted. Assuming confirmation of the assault, the computer then informs the player of how much air support the enemy is allocating and then presents you with the option of adding air support. This is most important. Because of the paucity of NATO reinforcements, the best best is to allocate enough air support to maintain air superiority in the most important engagements each turn and to avoid conflict once all the air units have been exhausted until next turn.

The computer then calculates the results and a few sound effects add atmosphere to the proceedings. If a unit is destroyed, an explosion occurs within the relevant hex and the unit marker disappears. It may be that neither unit is lost in which case a message noting the reductions in fighting capability of each unit is displayed. Alternatively, the attacker or defender may have to retreat. To retreat successfully means moving out of the opponent's zone of control without entering another unit's ZOC or a hex fully stacked with friendly forces. If this is not possible, the retreating unit will be eliminated. At this point, losses to both sides are displayed.

The game is furiously paced and has an excellent computer opponent who relentlessly pursues any and all possible weaknesses in the enemy dispositions. Amstrad owners may lack the formidable SSI range in their choice but Cybercom could easily become a viable English alternative if it is supported by the users. The quality of the game puts it alongside many of the better SSI releases on other machines.

The instructions could be improved (and perhaps will be on the final version) and the game did crash at one point during a fight on a map edge. However, these are small niggles. Battlefield Germany is complex, compelling, challenging and wonderfully addictive. At the moment, the game is only available by mail order. However, Robert McMahon intends to try and persuade a distributor to take his game if it receives enough support. It deserves it.

By the way the company's full address is Cybercom Enterprises, 16 Egdon Drive, Merley, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1TY.

A PLAYER'S VIEW

At the start of the game, the best policy is to plan your approach to battle. This gives you the chance to form scattered units into powerful spearhead forces. As you move through West Germany, there is a chance that you will be forced into small areas which are difficult to defend. Try to keep your front line as coherent as possible. Be prepared to hit and then fall back.

Never go into large scale combat without suitable air support or losses will be tremendously high. Also, try to keep a retreat route open or more units than necessary will be lost to the enemy. When a unit is down to its last iota of combat strength, it may be sent forward for a holding action. The chances are it will be eliminated as it will bear the brunt of the enemy advance and hardly warrants air support but can slow enemy units down by judicious use of the ZOC rules.

With the large scale nature of this strategy being such as it is, these are only general guidlines but one rule must be remembered. Once an action has been entered into, stick with it. Even early losses can be turned into later victories if carefully planned. This is one game surely worthy of any ardent strategy gamer's collection.

Presentation 90%
Graphics 95%
Complexity 89%
Authenticity 88%
Lastability 94%
Value for money 91%
Overall 93%

SO YOU WANT TO GO TO WAR. . .

AMTIX! COMPETITION

WIN FAME AND A GAME FROM CYBERCOM ENTERPRISES

Budding strategists, lend me your ears! Cybercom Enterprises have offered ten copies of their new game *Battlefield Germany* along with the chance of fame and fortune as prizes in the very first AMTIX! strategy comp. They are looking for exciting new ideas which can be turned into new products for the company and are looking for your help. If you can design a game within the following parameters, it could be your lucky day. You don't need any programming expertise, Cybercom will supply that. What they need are game structures and plots around which the programs may be written.

Think of a background for a wargame. It can be a period from history, fantasy, science fiction or a contemporary scenario. Then a map should be drawn up. It doesn't need to be a work of art but should be clearly laid out and on a hex grid about 15 x 23 hexes (ready drawn hex paper is available at any hobby shop for a few pence). Then design the units that will fight on each side. Whether they are futuristic storm troopers or WWII naval units doesn't matter so long as the total number of units on each side does not exceed 160.

The ten best entrants will each receive a copy of *Battlefield Germany* and an AMTIX! T-shirt. Their entries will also be fowarded to Cybercom as prospective future releases by that company. Cybercom will of course make a proper marketing deal for each of the scenarios it turns into a real game. Get yer thinking caps on, folks, and don't forget to state your T-Shirt size.

All entries should arrive no later than July 20th and be addressed to: **BATTLEPLAN COMPETITION, AMTIX!, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

PICK A LOCK AND WIN YOUR VERY OWN PRINTER

A Centronics GLP Printer, Beyond T-shirts and copies of *Shadowfire* to be won



Have you ever played *Shadowfire*, the icon driven adventure game where you must rescue Ambassador Kryxix from the evil clutches of the traitor General Zoff who has imprisoned him within his skyfortress Zoff V? Well, this competition minion hadn't until the other day. It's very difficult for me to get my hands on any game without the screaming primadonnas that make up the AMTIX! reviewing staff throwing me off the computer and sending me off to mail order to report to Aunt Aggie for fatigues duty with yet more bulging mailsacks to be carried up the several flights of stairs until I collapse from fatigue.

Well, *Shadowfire* is such a good game that I decided the only way to play it through was to lock myself in the relative sanctity of the broom cupboard and nestle down within, away from the ghetto blasters and the jealous eyes of Malcolm 'I've been around the world' Harding. Such was my delight in the novelty of ordering each of the six characters that make up the Enigma Force around General Zoff's ship, that time ran away with me and I missed the gentle creak of Malcolm's bathchair as he locked the office and left for the more relaxed shores of the *Pig and Ball Bearings* and the happiness he discovers as he wraps his wrinkled little gums around a pork pie and a pint of Old Flatulence bitter. Happy days for him but I was stuck in a rotten broom cupboard with only the prospect of a little enforced overtime to comfort me. Then I remembered Sevrina Maris who, although I didn't have the pleasure of going to school with, did plant the idea of picking the lock. She's the member of the Enigma force in the game who is an expert at picking locks.

Eventually I managed to escape from my reluctant prison but not before I came up with an idea for a competition — one for which the very smooth Mr Michael Baxter has charmed **Saga Systems** of Woking into letting him have a **Centronics GLP printer** as first prize. Such is the man's charm that there's also **20 Beyond T-Shirts** and **30 copies of *Shadowfire*** the game, on either disk or cassette to be given away to runners up.

SHADOWFIRE

AMTIX! COMPETITION



NAME: ....

ADDRESS: ....

....

SHIRT SIZE ______



All you have to do is to help poor old Sevrina pick a lock she's come up against. She has several keys, only one of which will open the lock, and what you must do is spot the clues she's obviously missed that would let her know which key works. Thanks to your super eidetic memory, you can tell that the picture on the left and the one on the right are not quite the same. Ring the differences on the coupon pic, fill in the details and send it off to **YOU'LL NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE AGGIE, AMTIX! MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** to arrive here before the 21st July.

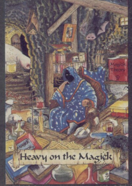
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OLD TROLL!





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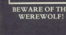
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THE MINION'S REVENGE PART TWO

CALLING ALL HOAXERS, PRANKSTERS AND TRICKSTERS!

Design a Joke and win a complete Practical Joke Kit

The vile and despicable Uncle Mal has been making your Minion's life a misery again. Apart from trying to lob me into the AMTIX! Towers Black Hole (rotters!), they've suddenly taken to playing all sorts of practical jokes on Yours Truly.

You see, those wacky and zany gals at St Bride's School have just come up with a spoof adventure. In it, *The Very Big Cave Adventure*, you explore a set of caves with your guide, Trixie Trinian, and have to deal with lots of weird and wonderful situations. Puns abound — for instance, there's a bull that lives in a gulley: A Gulleybull! (groan). Stacks of lateral thinking as well as punsmithing has gone into the game — there's even the world's first text-only version of *Space Invaders* in one location!

But on to the root of this Minion's current problem with the grey haired one. The St Bride's lot are a fun-loving bunch, who like nothing better than playing jolly practical jokes on one another. They're stuck out in the depths of greenest Ireland, though, and have to get all their fun equipment from Mail Order japesters MATCHRITE, purveyors of all sorts of wizard wheezing equipment from rubber masks, electrifying ciggy lighters and X Ray Specs to pongy spray aerosols, water machine guns and exploding teaspoons. Keen to let everyone share in the fun, St Brides and their publishers, CRL, want to give half a dozen practical joke kits away to AMTIX! readers.

To help persuade Uncle Mal that this was a good idea, they sent a selection of goodies from the jokemasters for him and the other AMTIX! hierarchy to play with — hairy hands, joke flies, cobweb spray and water machine guns and so on.

And guess who's the guinea pig? Right in one. There I was, slinking back to the broom cupboard, and what did I find, strategically placed at knee height? A trip wire fixed to a water machine gun SPLOOSH! Wet Knees. SPLAT! A custard pie in the face from Malcy quickly followed and then I was chased round the office by Mr Liddon begging for the crumbs. I ask you.

Cleaned up and settled down in the broom cupboard I sat down to a good session with a cuppa, bag of doughnuts and the latest romance from Minions and Boone and what sproings to the surface of my steaming tea? A plastic fly, floating legs to the air. BANG goes the exploding teaspoon when I try to fish it out, SPILL goes the hot tea, YAROO OUCH goes your Minion, dancing round the confines of his retreat.

That was only the beginning. For days now I've been plagued with plastic doggy do's, rubber egg sarnies, toilets that burst into song everytime I go near them, leering Frankenstein faces popping up at odd moments and all sorts of unpleasant japes. Tee Hee, goes HE WHO MUST BE OBEYED. Snarl Snarl go I.

I WANT REVENGE

Design for me, oh faithful readers, the ultimate piece of Practical Joking Hardware that I may build it according to your instructions and wreak my revenge on the MAN. Come up with a fiendish device, specially tailored to cause the maximum pain and embarrassment to him.

Come on chaps and chapesses. You can do it. Design a Practical Joke and I'll reward you handsomely with prizipoos supplied by CRL and St Brides. Best device wins its designer the following: Water Machine Gun; Hairy Hand; Joke Flies; Snow Blizzard Tablets; Balloon Water Bombs; Giant Python; Mad Dog Lighter; Talking Toilet; Exploding Teaspoon; Vibrating Handshaker; Amazing Flying Bird; Cobweb Spray and Frankenstein Mask. Five runners up are to receive slightly less comprehensive joke kits, comprising: Water Machine Gun; Hairy Hand; Joke Flies; Snow Blizzard Tablets; Balloon Water Bombs and a Giant Python.

Whizz your Japes in to **AMTIX! MINION'S REVENGE PART TWO, AMTIX!, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** and make sure they arrive by 21 July. Okay? Okay, get thinking.

AMTIX! COMPETITION



WINNERS

Well another month has gone by and it's time to sort out some more lucky winners. Uncle Malcolm has delved into the assorted boxes and bags and pulled out those who are lucky and now it's left to me to do all the leg work. Oh, by the way, there have been some complaints that prizes have not been reaching their destination. On behalf of 'he who must be obeyed', and the sponsoring companies, can I ask all you winners to be patient. The lists of prize winners are sent off to the company involved as soon as the magazine appears at your favourite newsagent and after that it is up to the company itself to despatch the goodies in whatever form. Hope that explains the situation to all of who who are suffering withdrawal symptoms of any kind for the non-appearance of the aforementioned objects.

And a special message to the six readers who are patiently awaiting their **DK'Tronics** goodies. Can **B Bond, Anthony Brady, D Tatam, R E Moulton, Claire Turner**, and **D Bailey** contact Big Malc as soon as possible and state which Amstrad they own! This information is needed so the company can despatch the correct goodies.

One thing I have noticed in recent months is that certain members of the public are entering every one of our competitions and their persistence appears to be paying dividends for them. The moral of this, dear readers, is to utilise the old grey matter and send in your entry post haste. After all if you don't enter you don't stand a chance. Whereas if you do etc etc!

Another thing I have noticed (I'm not as stupid as our ed thinks) is that only a few of the fairer sex are entering the competitions. I know there are female owners of Amstrads out there so why don't you sit down and win yourself some goodies. Go on show our chauvinist editor you can deliver the goods!

Once again we have come to that moment where the latest batch of lucky readers achieve fame by having their names printed in AMTIX! Congratulations on your success, and to all those who entered and were unsuccessful, words of commiseration. Don't give up hope. Keep entering and it could be your name that is published in the next issue.

THE VIRGIN GANG OF FIVE VISUAL COMPETITION

In the April issue of AMTIX! you were asked to draw a picture of the famous Gang of Five of **Virgin Games** fame. It was not an easy task because the gang tend to live anonymous lives and until recently they have always run a mile whenever a camera was pulled from its little case. As usual you were very inventive and the five overall winners will each receive a Virgin Quartz Watch, a super Virgin Airlines Flight Bag, and a copy of the game *Strangeloop*. The 25 runners-up each receive a copy of the game.

The clever five were **Alexander McFee**, Heath Hurst Rd, NW3 2RU, **Edward Price**, Bryngwyn Rd, NP9 4JS, **Stephen Humphreys**, Boode Croft, L28 4EW; **GJ Rush**, Holmes St, OL12 6AQ, and **Michael Eason**, of North Marsh Rd, DN21 2RN. The following receive copies of the game.

David Heath, Kensworth Close, Staffs, Laurence Fummacelli, Sandhills, LS4 3DN, K Gibbons, Sefton Terrace, LS11 7EL, Stephen Spilkings, New Bolingbroke, PE22 7JL, Paul Edwards, Mildmay Avenue, SG1 5TW, Simon, Sloane Court East, 4TQ SW3, G O'Sullivan, Coronea, Ireland, Richard Swan, Hengist Ave, CT9 2UA, Andrew James, Church Rd, CO6 3NA, Steven Crawford, Congleton Rd, SK9 7AD, J Mason, Princes Way, PO37 7DY, J Smith, Honeysuckle Rd, SO2 3BW, John Burd, Anson Drive, TF1 4XW, Stephen Eddleston, Nelson Close, TN16 3LS, William Hopkins, Ashford in the Water, DE54 1QF, Eric Wilson, Eagles Lane, CB6 2TG, Tommy Abel, Arundel Rd, CR0 2ER, Simon Kellemer, Topcliffe Drive, TS5 8HZ, Graham J Stagg, The Lindens, CR0 9EN, D G Sheppard, Prinsted Walk, PO14 3AD, Philip J Wand, Middleton Rd, CM15 8DJ, T Schofield, Henley Rd, RG4 0DJ, Vijay Lad, Fford Garmonydd, LL12 8JE, Neil Sutton, St Michaels Ave, M29 0PS, Christopher Smith, Giant Tree Hill, WD2 1HA

SAVE THE GALAXY COMPETITION AND WIN YOUR OWN ROBOT

Designing a robot can be a lot of fun and some of the entries sent in for this competition were excellent. It took a lot of head scratching before we could decide on an overall winner but eventually it was decided to award the working scale model of a Robotix 4000 robot to **Nick Leigh**, of Staffordshire ST5 4HZ. He will also be receiving a copy of the game *Tau Ceti*. Have fun Nick!

The following five readers each receive a Dingbot diddy robot and a copy of the game, *Tau Ceti*, by way of a consolation prize.

Clifford Fenton, Surrey GU23 6JU; Lee Close, Manchester M14 7BX; John Burd, Telford TF1 4; Theo Marlanios, London N22 5AD; Steven Humphries, Liverpool L28 4EW

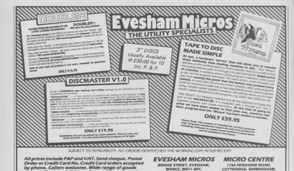
Finally the following lucky people will each be receiving a copy of that super game.

Josslen Attridge, Essex RM14 1DR; J Smith, Southampton SO2 3BW; Thomas Hearn, Peterborough PE14 6JP; Jason Stokes, Staffordshire WS11 1DW; William Freeland, Midlothian EH22 5QZ; Heath Steward, Worcestershire B61 9HN; Caroline Carpenter, Avon BS22 0NX; Justin Howlett, Peterborough PE2 0RP; Scott Logan, Lanarkshire ML11 9RA; Matthew White, Leeds LS8 1NS; Tom Hearn, Peterborough PE4 6JPD; D Ramdenee, Essex RM18 8TD; C Bartlett, York YO2 2PZ; Mr Eric Wilson, Cambs CB6 2TG; Edward Price, Newport, Gwent; Haydn Thorne, Peterborough PE3 6BZ; James Kirk, Stafford ST18 0SF; Marc Bichener, Beds MK41 8HS; Daniel H Ciddor, Milton Keynes; Matthew Barnes, Devon PL6 5TQ; Andrew Gladwell, Dorset BH14 9EW; Julian Morgan, Lancs WN2 2SD; Nick Turner, Shropshire WV16 4SS; David Hall, Manchester M32 9HA; Lee Close, Manchester M14 7BX.

THE MOVE NORTH, MOVE SOUTH, MOVE WEST, WHAT NOW? COMPETITION

Knocking forty words into some sort of order to describe a location piccie put together by the *Graphic Adventure Creator* had mailbags bulging with all sorts of literary goodies and some of the synopses of your own adventure ideas were classics in their own right. After opening all the entries and looking at each idea we decided to send the first prize of the DMP 2000 printer to **PJ Hankin**, Sutton Way, TW5 0JA who I hope will use the printer and the graphic package to write the whole adventure. The rest of you can use the copies of the *Graphic Adventure Creator* that will be winging their way North, South, East, and West under the wrappings of their very own jiffy bags. The lucky twenty are:

J Smith, Honeysuckle Road, SO2 3BW; Steven Dixon, Auckland Ave, DL3 0LH; Paul Robson, Park Lane, TS1 3LQ; Paul Edwards, Mildway Rd, SG1 5TW; RS Wylie, Dunnet, KW14 8YD; Gary Sutherland, Broadway, YO1 4JZ; K Smith, Barwell Square, BL4 7TQ; Simon Gibbs, Green Lane, S18 6LN; Stuart Emsley, Oakmore Lane, EN6 5LT; RG Messenger, Abernethy, PH2 9NE; Caroline Carpenter, Tavistock Rd, BS22 0NX; Alan Gorry, Chetwode Close, CV5 9NA; Robert Ingram, Cadbury Drive, B35 7EY; Aiden McElholm, Ardmore Ave, BT78 5AS; Alexander Medawer, Heath Hurst Road, NW3 2RU; Stephen Humphreys, Boode Croft, L28 4EW; Mike Wong, Alcester Rd, M33 3QP; Joanna Hart, Fulner Close, TW12 3YP; I Ahumada, Orlock Walk, Nottingham; JP Gorman, Pennine House, N9 0TE



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Right, I'll get the boring intro bit out of the way as quick as poss, after all who wants to read a boring intro anyway? Firstly there are some really ace *Elite* tips. Yes, I know some tips on this game have already been printed but they were for the Commodore version — these are for Amsters. There's also a *NOMAD* map along with lots of useful little bits. Feast your proverbial eyeballs me ol' mates.

Oh, by the way. Have any of you readers got an old Vectrex Video Game Console (with a couple of ROMs maybe??) lying around in your cupboard? Perhaps your friend has? If you or they don't want it any more then contact me 'cos I do. I'll give a fair price . . . Write to the tips section.

ELITE (Firebird)

Good old Brian Campbell of Langley in Berks has achieved the rank of Elite, and being a generous old devil has decided to tell you all how he achieved it. Take it away Bri . . .

GENERAL TIPS

* Stay away from anarchy and feudal planets until you are combat experienced.
* Don't waste credits on side lasers — you don't really need them, unless you want to pose of course. What you do need though, are front and rear military lasers as soon as possible.
* The escape pod doesn't show up on your status page even though you may have one — the reason why is because room is left to show your special equipment when (or if) you get it.
* To increase your rating kill all ships both pirate and harmless.
* To make a lot of credits trade in narcotics, firearms and furs, but only when you're combat experienced.
* If a space station is not rotating it contains pirates.
* Don't waste your energy bomb on Thargoid motherships — it doesn't work, although it'll blow the baby Thargoid ships to kingdom come.
* Go for the packs of two and three when attacking fleets of enemy craft, although first switch on your cloak if you have it.
* Use a targetted missile as a range finder for your lasers and always keep one missile to use as a range finder.
* Missiles are slow and sometimes stupid — use your lasers if and when you can.
* When going to anarchy and feudal planets keep enough hyperspace fuel to allow you to jump out of danger to a nearby planet.

WHAT TO EXPECT

From COMPETENT
Three 'Right on Commander's to
DANGEROUS
One 'Right on Commander'
FIRST MISSION
Three more 'Right on Commander's
SECOND MISSION
Two 'Right on Commander's
DEADLY
One 'Right on Commander'
THIRD MISSION
Thirteen 'Right on commander's
ELITE

It takes between 200 and 230 kills for a 'Right on Commander' depending upon the types of ships you kill — some ships have higher kill points than others.

FIRST MISSION

The object of this mission is to rescue refugees from a space station which is loafing around rather near a Sun about to go nova. When the mission begins you'll develop a fuel leak soon after hyperspacing to the planet where the endangered space station is floating and consequently a loss of your remaining hyperspace fuel will be experienced. Don't dock with the endangered space station now because they have no fuel for sale and you'll get stuck, suffering the same fate as they. What you must do is sun skip with your fuel scoops to replenish your now empty hyperspace tanks. After you've refilled your tanks in this fashion you can rescue the refugees without fear of taking a small part in the forthcoming heavenly holocaust.

When you've left the space station with the refugees on board hyperspace to another planet and you will find that you have been blown into the next galaxy by the sun going nova. Deliver the refugees to any space station to reap your reward.

SECOND MISSION — THE INVISIBLE ASP

According to Mr Campbell this is the most difficult of all the missions. When the invisible Asp first appears you'll see a flashing dot on the screen. It usually comes in with a fleet of other craft but sometimes on its own. Ignore any other ships on the screen, target a missile (but don't fire it) on the Asp and head directly towards it. The only indication you will now have of the Asp's position is its incoming laser fire. When the missile indicator shows that it is in range of your laser start firing. Keep firing and try to score as many hits on it as possible. As the Asp's energy diminishes it'll become visible allowing you to destroy it. When the Asp is destroyed it'll drop a cargo cannister — pick it up at all costs because it's the cloaking device. By this time your ship's energy will be very low. If there are any other ships about energy bomb them, or if you have enough hyperspace fuel escape to safety. Now get to a space station, dock and save the game as quickly as you can.

To use the cloaking device press the Y key and your ship becomes invisible to all other ships on the screen, giving you a great advantage when fighting fleets etc, but watch your energy consumption — when you're down to the last bar you become visible again.

THIRD MISSION — THE INVASION

This mission requires the destruction of a Thargoid held space station. At the start of this mission you'll be given an ECM System Jammer which allows you to fire missiles at ships that have ECM systems, and at the end of the mission use your missiles to destroy the space station held by the Thargoids. To use the ECM jammer press the Y key, but watch your energy as this also turns on your cloak.

The approach to the space station is barred by Thargoids but with careful use of your cloak and jammer you should be able to reach it quite easily. As soon as the station is in range destroy it with your missiles but remember — you MUST have the jammer turned on. When you have blown up the station escape to become an 'Archangel' and keep going until you reach Elite status.

THARGOID HUNTING

When you have the cloaking device and the ECM jammer try this out to increase your rating. Find a rich industrial and poor agricultural planet near to each other and trade in furs/narcotics or firearms to increase your credits. Start to hyperspace between the two planets but during the countdown freeze the game (DELETE key). Press the F key (should hear a beep) and unfreeze the game (CLR key) to continue the hyperspace process. The instant you come out of hyperspace turn on your cloak and jammer and you'll go into Witch Space and become surrounded by Thargoids, but they won't be able to see you! Destroy the Thargoids with missiles and lasers before your energy becomes



so low that you become visible again. Don't increase your speed when you come out of hyperspace — just let the Thargoids drift towards you, any that get past can be destroyed by your rear laser. Keep an eyeball on your laser temperature and energy and with practice you should be able to destroy all attacking fleets of Thargoids in Witch Space. With practise you should be able to dispose of fleets of three, four and five ships before the ship's energy becomes so low that it becomes visible again.

When all the Thargoids are destroyed turn the cloak and jammer off and wait until your energy and shields to replenish themselves again. To get out of Witch Space you must have enough hyperspace fuel to reach your destination planet. This is easy to check on your Short Range Chart. Set your destination planet and before starting the hyperspace routine turn the Witch Space key off (the same as turning it on) then you can hyperspace as normal. If you use this method of Thargoid hunting and trade in furs, narcotics and firearms your combat rating and credits will climb rapidly. It takes about 80 kills, mostly Thargoids, for a Right on Commander as opposed to the 200 to 230 normal kills required. It is difficult at first but you'll soon learn all the Thargoid attack patterns.

ROCK AND WRESTLE (Melbourne House)

Here are some tips from Jamie Sowdon **who hails from Headley in Surrey to help you wrestle your way to success. Before we have a breakdown of each of the wrestlers here are some general tips:**

* If you are caught in an armspin circle your joystick/keys in the opposite direction to the way you're being spun.
* If you're being pinned wiggle the joystick/bash the keys the opposite way to the direction you're lying ie if you're facing upwards then wiggle/bash left and right.
* It's better to use the keyboard because you can acheive faster spins.

Now, here's how to beat the different characters . . .

REDNECK McCOY: Wobble up to him and get him in a headlock, do a pile-driver and pin him.
MOLOTOV MICK: Grab him in a headlock and then aeroplane spin him. Chuck him down and stomp him until his energy has gone, allowing you to pin him with ease.
ANGRY ABDUL: Get this nasty man in an arm spin and once a fair velocity has been acheived let him go. Drop kick him then stomp on him to drain his energy. Once it's all gone pin him.
LA BRUCE: Boot him around a bit and when his energy is half gone put him in a headlock and pile drive him. Now pin to win.
MISSOURI BREAKER: Go behind him, do a back breaker then follow him to the ropes and do yet another back breaker. Keep on back breaking until his energy runs out. When this happens do a suplex and pin him.
VICIOUS VIVIEN: Get this vile specimen on the canvas in any way possible and stomp the energy out of him, then pin him.
FLYING EAGLE: He moves fast so be prepared to do battle. Get him in an aeroplane spin and then let go, do a clothes line, let him get halfway to his feet then pin him.
BAD BARNEY TROUBLE: This horrible character is the most difficult to beat. Try to sap his energy without being grabbed. Get him to the canvas in any way possible, stomp the energy from him then pin.
LORD TOFF: Follow the same instructions for Vicious Vivien.

ZOIDS (Martech)

Here are some tips from Mark 'I've solved Zoids' Devany **who comes from the nether regions of Uddington in Glasgow. Refer to the map which we printed a couple of issues back.**

GENERAL BITS: It's highly unlikely you'll meet Mammoth the Destroyer or Redhorn the Terrible before becoming the Great Gorgon. If you do, though, run like hell. NB: The same applies for Serpent Zoids.

Play for as long as possible at a stretch — it takes a while to get accustomed to the control method so be prepared to persevere. Save the game as often and as you can and as soon as you are promoted — don't forget!
MOVEMENT: Whenever you are moving keep close to the missile icon otherwise you might not be able to reply to an incoming attack (from a Spineback or whatever)
ATTACKING INSTALLATIONS: Get as close to your target as possible before targetting your missiles. This cuts down the time on the missile screen. Attack mines first, then beacons followed by the city domes themselves. Oh, and watch out — city domes may have stockpiles of materials to replace Zoids even after the mine has been destroyed.
STATUS SCREEN: Always keep this so it displays your Zoidar power since you'll run out of this long before you use up your ammunitions magazine.
HELLRUNNERS: These can and will attack you at every available opportunity. Their missiles only slightly deplete your shields but can knock large chunks off your Zoidar power.
MAMMOTH AND REDHORN: Mammoth appears as soon as you become Great Gorgon, and Redhorn appears as soon as you become Zoidzilla. Attack both of these at about three quarters of the missile range. Any closer and they'll launch a deadly strike against you.
ZOIDZILLA PIECES: These are usually found underneath the ruins of a city dome but can be found under beacons. Search everything you destroy — if there isn't a piece of Zoidzilla then there'll always be a Zoidar power pod.

SWEEVO'S WORLD MAP

If you're constantly finding yourself lost in Sweevo's World then you can always use this bijou mapette for reference. Many fanx to Hayden Harris **of Trowbridge, Wilts for compiling the thing. There'll be some tips if and when I get them.**

BOMB JACK (Elite)

Here are a couple of tips from moi . . .

The key to acheiving high scores on this arcade conversion is by earning yourself the big bonuses awarded to a Jack who can collect all the sparking bombs. Collecting the first bomb causes the fuse on the next bomb in the line to spark. Just run/fly along/down the line and as you collect each sparking bomb the next one will automatically light. When you've cleared that row, another bomb at the end of a line elsewhere on the screen will start to spark. Collect those bombs in the same fashion and so

LEVEL ONE · LEVEL TWO · LEVEL THREE · LEVEL FOUR

KEY: BRN - BROWNIE
ALN - ALIEN
TED - TEDDY BEAR
TRT - TYRANT
DOWN ↓ - HOLE
UP ↑ - LIFT
BOO - DROP THIS IN FRONT OF A GOOSE

on until you clear the screen. If you get all the bombs you'll earn yourself 50,000 points! Wheeeeee.

Each screen has its own distinct order in the way the bombs spark and these patterns can be easily learnt to help boost your score by hundreds of thousands.

Dodging the nasties isn't too difficult — once you get a couple of mean mateys trying to catch you just go to the bottom and sit there and wait for the sloth-like creatures to descend to your level. Then jump to the top of the screen and clear the bombs. If there are bombs at the bottom just goad the meanies to the top. Easy huh? Oh, if you have a power pill thingy floating around the screen don't get it until you have either cleared nearly all the bombs or need it to allow you to collect bombs guarded by a nasty, otherwise you might have to fly through some unlit bombs to get a yellow hostile, messing up your bonus in the process.

THE LITTLE, BUT JOLLY USEFUL, TIPS

STARQUAKE (Bubble Bus)

A certain Stephen Swain **chappie from Birmingham has found all the codes for *Starquake*! Here they am:**

1. VOREX
2. AMBOR
3. DULON
4. ELIXA
5. TALIS
6. INDOL
7. ZODIA
8. ASCIO
9. UPAZZ
10. SNODY
11. KRYZL
12. QUORE (where the bits should be assembled)

THING ON A SPRING (Gremlin Graphics)

This little tiplet was found by many of you intrepid readers! On the title screen type T H I N G and the border should go black. If it does then you'll have unlimited oil — useful to say the least. Who knows the *Monty on the Run* cheat then, eh?

N.O.M.A.D.

START

* It's best to open up the gates by pushing every switch that you encounter.
* Every time you come to the edge of the screen stop, face diagonally and trundle forward, guns blazing. Using this method you shouldn't have too much trouble disposing of any lurking gun emplacements
* On the ultimate screen enter with caution, but make sure you keep up a hail of offensive bullets. To destroy the evil archcriminal Gross you have to shoot the slot at the top of the screen.

N·O·M·A·D· MAP COMPILED

● POKES ● POKES ● POKES ● POKES ● POKE

Cy Booker has been POKEing around his Amstrad's memory and has come up with these gemlettes.

FAIRLIGHT (The Edge)

This spiffing little listing gives unlimited energy!

```
10 OPENOUT "D": MEMORY &27C: MODE 1: INK 0,0: INK 1,2: INK 2,25: INK 3,6: BORDER 0: LOAD "!PIC",&C000
20 LOAD "!FCD"
30 POKE &7D2F,0: REM INFINITE LIFE
40 POKE &6219,0: POKE &612A,0: POKE &621B,0: REM CAN SEE THE SCREEN BEING DRAWN UP(!)
50 CALL &9380
```

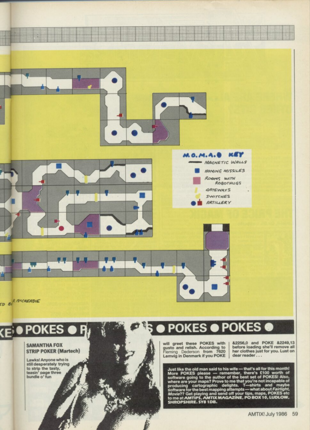
MUTANT MONTY (Artic)

By jingo! Here are some pokes for unlimited lives. The listing skips past the first BASIC loader and then loads in the main file.

```
10 MERMORY &1BF1
20 LOAD "monty",7154: REM THAT SHOULD BE IN LOWER CASE
30 POKE &923A,0
40 POKE &9241,0
50 POKE &9247,0: POKE &9248,0: POKE &9249,0
60 CALL 7154
```

BOUNDER (Gremlin Graphics)

Another unlimited lives poke, although this one is from Tony Hoyle **from St Annes in Lancashire. All you have to do is POKE 800,21 and then load the program as per normal for more balls than you can ever imagine. Wowsiree!**



POKES ● POKES ● POKES ● POKES ●

SAMANTHA FOX STRIP POKER (Martech)

Lawks! Anyone who is still desperately trying to strip the tasty, teasin' page three bundle o' fun will greet these POKES with gusto and relish. According to Fleming Dederson from 7620 Lemvig in Denmark if you POKE &2256,0 and POKE &2249,13 before loading she'll remove all her clothes just for you. Lust on dear reader . . .

Just like the old man said to his wife — that's all for this month! More POKES please — remember, there's £100 worth of software going to the author of the best set of POKES! Also, where are your maps? Prove to me that you're not incapable of producing cartographic delights. T—shirts and maybe software for the best mapping attempts — what about *Fairlight*, *Movie*?? Get playing and send off your tips, maps, POKES etc to me at AMTIPS, AMTIX MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE. SY8 1DB.



WHERE ARE ALL THE OTHER BITS?

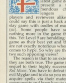


hough quite a few new games arrived at my untidy desk this month, several reviews have had to be omitted through lack of space. However, I hope to bring you reviews of lots of goodies next month. Incidentally, it's mainly due to the lack of space that *Swords & Sorcery* and *Heavy on the Magik* have been written as standard reviews. Another factor in this decision was that these games differed substantially from the norm and several opinions would give a better view of the game. But if any of you get tips for either of these games, I'd like you to send them to the Arcana.

Next month, I'll be taking a look at *Qor*, a new GACked game from a new company, Maltdale; Part 2 of *The lost Phirious* (which I'm told is a quadrilogy and not a trilogy as I previously reported) called *The Planets*; *Treasure Tunnels*, another GACked adventure by some people mysteriously known as *The Plasma Touch* and a couple of old favourites that have been converted by Ambyte for the PCW 8256. All this and much more in next month's (hopefully) juicy column. Be seeing you.

THE PRICE OF MAGIK

Level 9, £9.95, cassette



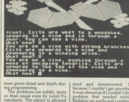
ew games from the Level 9 stable should never be dismissed out of hand but their latest game does present a tremendous challengers to players and reviewers alike. I could say this is just a hack and slay game with oodles of magik (*sic*). Some people have seen nothing more in the game than this. Yet Level 9 are heralding the game as their best yet and they are not exactly notorious when it comes to hype. So why are there two such opposing views?

The reason is that to an extent, they are both true. The game is a sequel to their highly successful *Red Moon*. You have to defeat the evil Myglar and to do so you must acquire spells via their material components and learn how to use them effectively. Most of the game involves exploring a massive house, encountering a variety of traditionally evil creatures and using magik to defeat them, thereby gaining access to more of the house.

The game uses the new parser allowing stacked commands (now being installed into older games for their re-release onto the market), the usual plethora of impressionistic graphic screens and a new feature. One side of the tape has the standard game but on the other side, the game has been specially modified for 128K machines by having more text. There is also a new move, OOPS, which allows you to back-step through moves you wish you had never made. The game is, of course, technically excellent as one has come to expect from Level 9.

The use of magic is imaginative as well. Pete Austin was greatly inspired by some of the concepts of the magic system used in the highly respected Runequest role playing game. As a result, magic is more of a general purpose tool than simply a collection of offensive weapons. However, it appears that another Chaosium RPG served as inspiration, *Call of Cthulhu*, based on the terrifying works of the late H P Lovecraft. In that game, the more you learn about magic, the closer you come to insanity. The same concept is put to good use in *The Price of Magik*. As you progress through the game, your sanity is continually 'shaken'. Hence the title of the game.

So the player is introduced to a few new ideas in the prossess. Instead of looking for a lamp to help you see in dark places, judicious use of a conspicuously named flower is required. And at least one of the apparent baddies is actually a worthy ally if dealt with properly. This brings to mind another interesting feature of the game. It's impossible to successfully complete *The Price of Magik* without interacting with a variety of different characters. Consequently, characters have



been given detail and depth during programming.

The problems are subtle, more so than usual even by Level 9's standards. The player is allowed to move with freedom through a large part of the game without needing to solve more than a couple of simple puzzles. And this brings me to the main problem with the game. It strikes me that perhaps Level 9 have been too clever for their own good. Interacting with other characters is great, the text is up to their usual standards, the magic is well implemented — but playing the game constantly gives the impression of repetitiveness. It all comes down to how you're going to deal with the next creature; kill it, zap it, help it or avoid it and then onto the next one.

It really is a shame that I find myself criticising a game from such a respected company and I must admit that it is way ahead of many other lesser efforts but we have all come to expect so much from Level 9 and they haven't lived up to their reputation with this adventure. I am in awe of the technical expertise exercised throughout and I tried to like the game. In the end, I found myself tired and disinterested. Not because I couldn't get anywhere. It was almost as if I couldn't find a problem that needed solving. Building up spells and combining them, then using them on other characters is all very impressive but the player is left so much in the dark as to how, why, where and when that after juggling the combinations in your mind for a while, it all became too frustrating.

It will take a while for people to decide whether they like this game or hate it. It took me a long time to discover how I felt about it — even now there are nagging doubts. No doubt the game will be another smashing success. It's just a pity that all their imagination seemed to be exhausted in well hidden ideas and nothing was left to beef up the plot or flavour the atmosphere. Whatever happens, *The Price of Magik* will not go un-noticed.

Atmosphere 82%
Plot 81%
Interaction 95%
Lastability 93%
Value for money 87%
Overall 88%

PICTURES FROM THE PRICE OF MAGIK (CBM 64 VERSION)



SEABASE DELTA

Firebird, £1.99, cassette

This title is a new addition to Firebird's £1.99 Silver range and not a bad affair it appeared to be either. It's a quilled game with graphics. The plot puts you in the unlikely role of a reporter called Ed Lines who's sub has been captured by a mysteriously deserted underwater base. To complete the game, the secrets of the base have to be unravelled and a mini sub found to enable escape.

This involves wandering around a vast complex by foot, elevator and tube car, all of which have puzzles associated to them. It's also necessary to collect the various parts of a diving suit and explore the exterior of the base. Some of the problems are very interesting indeed. For instance, I've discovered a mixing bowl, hen, flour, milk and a kitchen. Now there has to be a connection somewhere . . .

The game has a fairly large proportion of space devoted to graphics and these have been handled fairly well. Many of the graphic screens are similar (such as the next section of a tunnel) but there's enough variety to stop them being boring. Sound effects are put to use as well but only in a limited fashion.

For the most part, the game is quite simple. Quite often, problems can be solved first time around and whenever objects are found it is sometimes all too easy to figure out their importance. However, I don't see this as a criticism of the game, in fact quite the contrary. The puzzles are all very logical and this program represents an excellent vehicle for teaching the uninitiated about adventure gaming. For two quid, can you complain?

Well, just a little bit. The graphics are neat and well drawn as I have already pointed out, but as they are full screen affairs, they do slow the game down somewhat and leave the text descriptions sadly lacking. The pauses could have been shortened. The vocabulary is not immense (by quilled standards, it's very good) but some problems will be encountered here. In other words, don't expect anything too original or imaginative — the computer won't understand any outlandish commands anyway.

Presentation on screen is particularly neat. Nothing clever has been done to the character set so if you can't read it, it's your problem. However, the instruction leaflet that comes with the game is fairly dire. On the cover is a reasonable picture of the seabase (faithfully reproduced as a loading screen), but inside the information provided is minimal. Two tiny paragraphs describe the plot and a third gives you an elementary introduction to the dubious delights of two word input. Firebird spend the same space advertising their 'Silver Club'. Not a damning error of judgement but a shame nonetheless. Some companies could have marketed this game at a higher price and it deserved some atmospheric background for the player to read while the tape loads.

Although I've only played the game twice (total playing time — six hours or so), I've practically solved it without having to save or draw a map. But the game has been entertaining. It has internal consistency, shows a sense of humour and there are no hobbits. Can't be all bad now, can it?

Atmosphere 73%
Plot 69%
Interaction 57%
Lastability 62%
Value for money 79%
Overall 75%

ROBIN OF SHERLOCK

CRL (Delta 4), £7.95 cassette

One of the latest games to be thrown at me by an irate Amtix! editor is *Robin of Sherlock* by CRL. After nursing the bruise for a moment, I looked at the packaging and it started to become obvious why this game has attracted so much attention in the press. The cassette box is a typical medium size with an inlay containing instructions and a map (of dubious use — it appears to be a list of Hern's garden sheds) on its reverse side. It's the front cover that gets you. A man with mediaeval garb, wearing a deer hunter hat, smoking a meerschaum pipe and holding a violin in one hand and a magnifying glass in the other. Shall we say it's eye catching?

CRL have marketed this latest game from the notoriously funny team Delta 4, the people responsible for *Bored of the Rings*: This adventure, as the title suggests, is in the same vein as Bored. It's probably best described as a surrealistic poof on two subjects at once. You play the main character, Robin, in a wierd puzzle based comedy set in and around the forest of Sherwood.

The game is quilled and runs over three sub-games on two sides of the tape.

This is an excellent way of overcoming the inherent limitations in this aging but still respectable adventure writing utility. It uses graphics (on most of the screens) of a reasonable standard and the vocabulary seems quite adequate. It's also possible to carry out limited forms of conversation with some of the other characters in the game.

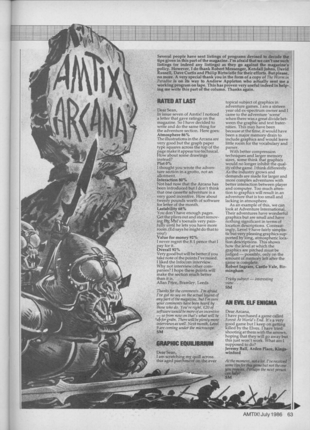
And what an interesting bunch the characters are. Al, the cabbie who's vehicle has been stolen, the Wizard of Huddersfield (who is holding the dog of a certain Dorothy to ransom), Grandfather Smurf and his minions, azure adversaries of Robin and his band of merry men, and a convent filled with mysterious inhabitants. It's all very strange indeed and begs the question as to what the Delta 4 team were drinking when they had their ideas. Come to think of it, it also begs the question as to whether their concoction is available to the general public . . .

Back to the game — the alcohol can wait for a while, I suppose. It is, as you may have guessed, a very funny affair. It's rather difficult to imagine Smurf henchmen but funny all the same. Even the simplest of text messages are tongue in cheek. Quite often when you move from A to B within the forest and are told that Robin has found himself within the forest but is not at all surprised by this, you get the impression that this latter day hero is something of a mixed up hack.

Going from one part of the game to another is fairly simple. The computer asks to make sure you know what you're doing and allows you to save your current status before proceeding. You often need information or material to progress through the different parts of the game but moving in reverse through the sections may normally be accomplished without any fuss. Incidentally, there is also a RAMsave facility in the game which often proves useful when attempting something dangerous. Actually, the whole affair is so banal that figuring out what's going to be straightforward and what is dangerous can be one of the trickiest problems you will encounter.

This is a very funny and well written game, not the greatest perhaps (there are moments when you cringe at the odd contrived witticism) but worth buying. It isn't exactly easy either. You can explore to your heart's content without getting a lead. This will probably gain cult status as did *Bored of the Rings* and hopefully add to Delta 4's reputation. Congratulations should also go to CRL for backing a good game and putting it out at a reasonable price.

Atmosphere 80%
Plot 81%
Interaction 69%
Lastability 78%
Value for money 80%
Overall 81%



Several people have sent listings of programs devised to decode the tips given in this part of the magazine. I'm afraid that we can't use such listings (or indeed any listings) as they go against the magazine's policy. However, I do thank Robert Messenger, Kendall Johns, David Russell, Dave Curtis and Philip Birtwistle for their efforts. But please, no more. A very special thank you in the form of a copy of *The Worm in Paradise* is on its way to Andrew Appleton who actually sent me a working program on tape. This has proven very useful indeed in helping me write this part of the column. Thanks again.

RATED AT LAST

Dear Sean,
In issue seven of Amtix! I noticed a letter that gave ratings on the magazine. So I have decided to write and do the same thing for the adventure section. Here goes:
Atmosphere 86%
The illustrations in the Arcana are very good but the graph paper type squares across the top of the page make it appear too technical. How about some drawings instead?
Plot 0%
I thought you wrote the adventure section in a grotto, not an allotment.
Interaction 80%
Not bad now that the Arcana has been introduced but I don't think that one cassette adventure is a very good incentive. How about twenty pounds worth of software for letter of the month.
Lastability 68%
You don't have enough pages. Get the pliers out and start removing Big Mal's toenails very painfully until he lets you have more room.(Ed says he might do that to you!)
Value for money 92%
I never regret the 8.1 pence that I pay for it.
Overall 92%
Very good but will be better if you take note of the points I've raised. I liked the Infocom interview. Why not interview other companies? I hope these points will make the section much better than it is.
Allan Price, Bramley, Leeds

Thanks for the comments. I'm afraid I've got no say on the actual layout of any part of the magazine, but I'm sure your comments have been heard by those who do. You're right, £20 of software would be more of an incentive — so from now on that's what will be up for grabs. There will be plenty more interviews as well. Next month, Level 9 are coming under the microscope.
SM

GRAPHIC EQUILIBRIUM

Dear Sean,
I am scratching my quill across this aged parchment on the ever topical subject of graphics in adventure games. I am a sixteen year old ex-spectrum owner and I came to the adventure 'scene' when there was a great divide between the graphic and text fraternities. This may have been because at the time, it would have been a major memory drain to include graphics and would leave little room for the vocabulary and parser.

With better compression techniques and larger memory sizes, some think that graphics would no longer inhibit the quality of the game. I think differently. As the industry grows and demands are made for larger and more complex adventures with better interaction between player and computer. Too much attention to graphics will result in an adventure that is too small and lacking in atmosphere.

As an example of this, we can look at Adventure International. Their adventures have wonderful graphics but are small and have nothing significant in terms of location descriptions. Contrastingly, Level 9 have fairly simplistic but very pleasing graphics supported by long, atmospheric location descriptions. This shows how the level at which the graphics are pitched must be judged — possibly, only on the amount of memory left after the game is complete.
Robert Ingram, Castle Vale, Birmingham

Tricky subject — interesting view . . .
SM

AN EVIL ELF ENIGMA

Dear Arcana,
I have purchased a game called *Forest At World's End*. It's a very good game but I keep on getting killed by the Elves. I have tried shooting at them with the arrows, hoping that they will go away but this just won't work. What am I supposed to do?
Jeremy Ball, Arden Place, Kingswinford

At the moment, not a lot. I've received some tips for this game but not the one you require. Perhaps the next person can help?
SM

AID FOR ADVENTURERS

Dear Sean,
I would like to offer help through your column to anyone having problems on the following games: *Red Moon; Worm In Paradise; Snowball; Message From Andromeda; Heroes Of Karn; Forest At World's End; Jewels Of Babylon; The Hobbit; Subsunk; Gremlins; Wise And Fool Of Arnold Blackwood; Trial Of Arnold Blackwood; Brawn Free; Angelique.*

I have completed all of them. If there are any you don't have the solution to, let me know. Meanwhile, if any of your readers would like direct help, I will be happy to oblige. All I need is an SAE and a description of the problem. 'Can't get anywhere,' doesn't make it easy to help those who are stuck. I would also like to get in touch with fellow GAC owners to share tips, problems and playtesting etc.

Pat Winstanley, Wigan

Hope you get plenty of response. At the moment, I'm looking for tips on Worm in Paradise, Lord of the Rings *and* Redhawk. *But don't let that limit you — I'm always grateful for tips of any kind.*
SM

WOT'S THIS APOCALYPSE NOW?

Dear Sean,
I am writing to you about that marvellous game, *The Hitch-Hikers Guide to the Galaxy*. The tips you have come up with so far have been extremely useful to me in dealing with the twisted sense of humour that makes the game so much fun. Luckily, I had already noticed your boob the other month and corrected that. However, having found myself well and truly confused within one of the alternative universes. I was back on Earth playing Arthur Dent, just before the planet's destruction when the program crashed telling me that the universe had ceased to exist for my having ignored one of the fundamental laws of the universe. Is this a fault in the game or just another of Steve Meretzky's little jokes?

One area I am having great difficulty with at the moment, is trying to get through the screening door on The Heart Of Gold. Are there any tips that you can provide to help? Marvin keeps popping up. Is there something that I should be asking him to do?

Keep up the good work. Being the owner of a PCW 8256, there are very few good adventure games available and Infocom have certainly come up with a winner with this one. Another plea: do you have any tips for Heroes Of Karn. I have got so far but am having trouble trying to get the sword.

M D Freeman, Fermain Bay, Guernsey

Unless memory is playing tricks on me, when you return to Earth in the alternative universe, you are Ford Prefect — not Arthur Dent. Try remembering what Ford did at the beginning of the game and re-enact it. I haven't experienced the Apocalypse you mention but I think Mr Meretzky's sense of humour is at play there.

Marvin won't help you get through the door. When you do get through, make sure Marvin isn't on the other side or you could be in deep trouble (well, dead actually). The device you need to enter the room is available during the encounter with the Bugblatter beast. When you find this, it should be pretty obvious. Here's a hint. You have to prove you're intelligent, right? Doing or having something while simultaneously not doing or having that something. . . . Well, there's a constant clue in your inventory listing.
SM

THE END OF A STORY

Below is the full solution to *The Never Ending Story* by Ocean.
Part 1: TL GL RELIB GLOVI ZMW TVG ZFIBM. TVG SLIM RM XOVZIRMT. To get Falkor, YOLD SLIM. UOB HLFGS LEVI WVHVIG. TL GL LIZXOV VMGIZMXV. DZRG FMGRO HKSRMCVH YORMP. TL HLFGS.
Part 2: To get the glowglobe TL GL VZHGVMW. TL GL DLLWVW ZIVZ ZMW TVG ILKV. IVNLEV KOZMPH RM IFRMVW YFROWRMT. TL GL PRGXSVM ZMW TVG PMRUV. TL GL TIZEVBZIW TVG KFHSVW WLDM TIZEV. TL GL HGLMV XLIIRWLI ZMW GBKV TL MLIGS ZMW TVG PVB. XFG DVY DRGS PMRUV ZG HGZRIH. TL GL XVOO ZMW TVGXLRM RM KLFXS. In the torture chamber WILK XLRM. Then TL DVHG GL TVG TLOWVM PVB. TL GL SROOGLK ZMW TVG YLGS UZOPLI ZMW ZFIBM.
Part 3: FMOLXP URIHG WLLI. TVG GSILFTS NZAVH. HZB KOZVZHV ZG GLK WLLI. TL ZMW HRMRHS!

And there you have it.

Craig Coombes, Glenkindie, Aberdeenshire

Thank you kindly for the solution. That should help solve a lot of problems — mine included.
SM

DISGUSTED — OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS?

Dear Sir,
I am not in the habit of being 'Disgusted Tunbridge Wells' over reviews that I disagree with, even if they slate my favourite games or rave over ones I feel aren't worth the tape they are recorded on. They are, after all, one person's opinion which is as valid as mine. But I must take you to task over your recent review of *Ring of Darkness* for you seem to have either not been supplied with instructions or simply neglected to read them! In order to use weapons, armour etc then one has to 'Ready' them first. And if you think it's safer in the towns, you should try attacking a guard!

On the point that it should not have appeared in this particular compilation, I agree with you. It has more in common with *Swords & Sorcery* or *Heavy on the Magick* than the more usual text adventures. To win you have to gain experience (and this means being killed many times). In my opinion, though it's not the greatest game ever and may not appeal to adventure buffs, it has many interesting points.

Kendall Johns, Deptford, London

Well, opinions being what they are, at least you have given another viewpoint to bear in mind. However, whilst I did make several mistakes when first playing the game (in fact I had no instructions to work from), I still feel that it's amateurish in implementation. I still feel the graphics are inexcusably appalling and that the gameplay is insubstantial. The author attempted to create a kind of Amstrad Ultima — a large scale game. Yet options seemed narrow and play repetitive. But there you go — it's only an opinion.
SM

HINTS FOR HEROES AND A RETURN TO ROBIN

Dear Sean,
Here are a few tips for *Heroes of Karn*. To kill the swamp lizard ORTSG NZIHS TZH DRGS GRMWVIYLG. To free Beren GZPV UILT GSVM PRHH RG. To kill the barrowright ZGGZXP RG DRGS YRYOU. To escape from the dungeon TREV TFZIW NLMVB. TREV SLMVB GL YVZI. To get the songbird GVOO YVIVM GL GZPV RG DSROV XZIIBRMT DRXPVI XZTV. To kill the servant tell Beren GL ZGGZXP RG DRGS HLMTYIRW. To free Istar, KOZB HOFGV.

In reply to the letter by David Kirkwood in the June issue, here are the required tips for *Robin of Sherwood*. You cannot get into Kirklees Abbey but to get a nun to answer PMLXP LM WLLI. You don't need Friar Tuck to follow you and to get into the Castle de Belleme without getting killed just XZIIB GSV HROEVI ZIILD.

Michael Jennings, Dodworth, S Yorkshire

I think you have just made a frustrated reader very happy — what a thoughtful attitude you have.
SM



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RED MOON

THE MAP.

(Thanks to Michael Jampel for the key and original map)

AND FINALLY . . .

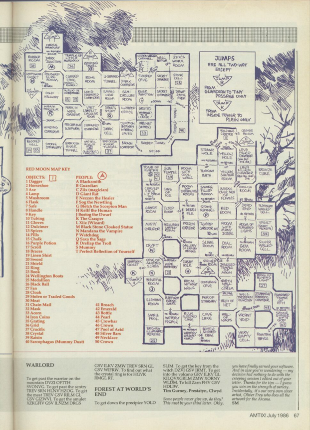
Dear Sean,
First of all, I would like to say what a marvellous response I've had from people wanting to help with adventures since you printed my letter in the April issue. I have enclosed some hints which may be of use. By the way, who does the superb pictures for your column?

THE HOBBIT

To get out of the goblin's dungeon ZHP VRGSVI GSLIRM LI TZMWZOU GL XZIIB BLF DVHG. To get through the trapdoor in the cellar DZRG ULI GSV YFGOVI GL GSILD Z YZIIVO GSVM GBKV QFNK. To kill Smaug ZHP YZIW GL PROO HNZFT. To get full points simply KFG VEVIBGSRMT YZXP DSVIV BLF ULFMW RG.

EMERALD ISLE

To get free of the parachute IVOVZHV KZIZXSFGV. If you're wondering what the wallet is for WILK RG RM GSV KLORXV HGZGRLM GL TVG Z IVDZIW. To light the lamp UROO RG DRGS DZGVI GSVM RMHVIG XZIYRWV XIBHGZOH. If you haven't discovered what the pliers are for, try using them to IVKZRI VOVEZGLI.



RED MOON MAP KEY

OBJECTS:
1 Dagger
2 Horseshoe
3 Axe
4 Lamp
5 Mushroom
6 Flask
7 Safe
8 Handle
9 Key
10 Tubing
11 Gloves
12 Dulcimer
13 Spices
14 Pills
15 Chalk
16 Purple Potion
17 Scroll
18 Braces
19 Linen Shirt
20 Sword
21 Shield
22 Ring
23 Book
24 Wellington Boots
25 Medallion
26 Black Ball
27 Fan
28 Cloak
29 Stolen or Traded Goods
30 Meat
31 Chain Mail
32 Mask
33 Acorn
34 Iron Coins
35 Grating
36 Grid
37 Crucifix
38 Crystal
39 Raisin
40 Sarcophagus (Mummy Dust)
41 Broach
42 Emerald
43 Bottle
44 Pearl
45 Crowbar
46 Crown
47 Pool of Acid
48 Silver Bars
49 Necklace
50 Crown

PEOPLE:
A Blacksmith
B Guardian
C Ziix (magician)
D Giant Rat
E Nezzon the Healer
F Sog the Newtling
G Bletch the Scorpion Man
H Kellf the Human
J Bostog the Dwarf
K The Grasper
L Xiiz (Wizard)
M Black Stone Cloaked Statue
N Mandana the Vampire
P Watchdog
Q Saxa the Sage
R Drellap the Troll
S Mummy
T Perfect Reflection of Yourself

WARLORD

To get past the warrior on the mountain DVZI OFTTH SVONVG. To get past the sentry TREV SRN HLNV HZOG. To get the meat TREV GSV RILM GL GSV GIZWVI. To get the amulet XZKGFIV GSV ILNZM DRGS GSV ILKV ZMW TREV SRN GL GSV WIFRW. To find out what the crystal ring is for HGVK RMGL RT.

FOREST AT WORLD'S END

To get down the precipice YOLD SLIM. To get the key from the witch DZVI GSV IRMT. To get into the volcano GRV ILKV GL KILQVXGRLM ZMW XORNY WLDM. To kill Zarn FHV GSV HDLIW.
Tim Gurney, Prestatyn, Clwyd

Some people never give up, do they? This must be your third letter. Okay, you have finally earned your software. And in case you're wondering — my decision had nothing to do with the creeping session I edited out of your letter. Thanks for the tips — I guess you win on the strength of variety. Incidentally, it's our very own cover artist, Oliver Frey who does all the artwork for the Arcana.
SM



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THE DO IT YOURSELF FAT JOYCE PLAN

AN AMTIX! EXCLUSIVE

In this special feature SIMON GOODWIN explains how easy it is to upgrade your PCW 8256 and double its RAM capability for just £20!

Amstrad's computer 'upgrades' are pretty notorious. Within a few months of the launch of the CPC664, the 6128 appeared, boasting twice the memory for less money, and prompting much gnashing of teeth among 664 owners.

Now Uncle Alan has boosted the Joyce word-processor to 512K of memory, and he's asking a cool £200 to upgrade last year's model into a twin-drive half-megabyte system. But this time you can install YOUR OWN memory upgrade, at a fraction of the official price. Interested? Read on . . .

JUST 8p A K!

You can upgrade a PCW 8256 to 512K of memory for about £20, with our step-by-step instructions. You end up with 368K of RAM disk — room for spelling checkers, utility programs or vast databases and text files, and all instantly accessible. You don't get a full PCW 8512 unless you add a second disk drive as well, but in practice that doesn't matter much as back-up copying is simple: you can copy an entire disk from drive A to drive M, and back onto another 'real' disk — in one go!

The memory upgrade is a simple, fifteen minute job, but we hardly need point out that Amstrad will not be happy if they find out what you've done. Study our explanation before you dive in, and remember that AMTIX! can't take the blame if something goes wrong. That said, it's a reversible operation (unless you've got a VERY early machine) so you should be able to restore the machine to its former state if you need service or you lose your nerve half-way through the operation.

THE JOYCE HISTORY

The PCW 8256, code-named 'Joyce', was originally designed as a PCW 8128. It was intended to have two sets of 64K chips, giving 128K bytes of memory. But every year or so new memory chips crawl onto the market. The internal wiring pattern means that each new component has four times the capacity of its predecessor.

As the Joyce neared the market, 64K chips became old hat, and 256K parts fell to bargain prices. Amstrad snapped up the new technology. Both sizes of memory use the same connections (one 'leg' on a 64K chip is unused) so it was easy to make the machine with one row of 256K chips, instead of two 64K rows.

That leaves a set of 'spare' sockets for another row of chips, ready and waiting. What they're officially waiting for, of course, is Amstrad's own upgrade; but sockets aren't fussy.

Similarly, the disk cable in a 256K machine continues from the first drive, to a connector for a second. Power wiring for the second drive is also ready and waiting.

So the PCW 8256 is a cut-down machine. All the connections for a PCW 8512 are hanging around (literally) inside. The software in the 8256 adapts to different machine configurations, automatically.

Memory is easy to get hold of, and cheap. Naked disk drives—especially the one-megabyte three inch variety the Joyce expects—are more costly and not so easy to track down. This month we'll explain how to boost the memory. As soon as we've found a supply of drives, we'll explain that upgrade as well!

Ready to begin the operation.
The author obviously thinks it's a hammer job!

SHOPPING FOR THE BITS

To upgrade your Joyce you'll need eight 256K RAM chips. The standard part number is 41256; other 'compatible' memories will probably work as well, and may be cheaper, but you should obtain a written promise of their compatibility from your supplier before you pay up.

RAM chips work at various speeds. The most common speed is 150 nS, which means that the component can communicate over six million times a second. The speed of a chip is usually indicated by a dash and some figures after the name: '-15' for 150 nS parts. We upgraded our Joyce with 41256-15's. Faster chips should work just as well, although they won't speed up the processor.

The right parts are available from most electronic component suppliers, including big names like Maplin. Bear in mind that chips are a volatile commodity. Prices vary a lot between suppliers, and change from week to week. At the time of writing, Happy Memories of Newchurch, Kington, Herefordshire could supply eight for £23, including VAT and postage. Their phone number is 054 422 618.

The only tool you'll need is a decent cross-point (Posidrive) screwdriver. Some of the screw are recessed, so a stunted Korean market-stall lead-alloy prong will probably not do the job! If you habitually use a flat-bladed screwdriver to undo cross-point screws we'll probably not be able to persuade you to do otherwise; we'll just laugh if you damage the screw-head or alert Amstrad to your D.I.Y. activities.

FATTENING BY NUMBERS

To keep you on the right track, we've taken careful photos of every stage of a Joyce-fattening session under the austere lights of a Newsfield Editorial slum. Follow the words and pictures, step by step, and you should be able to spot escaping screws and memory chips; a cushion or pillow may also come in handy to protect the machine's display.

STEP 1 SCREWS TO UNSCREW

Completely unplug the main box, disconnecting the power, keyboard and printer. If you've been using it recently, leave it for a few minutes to allow high voltages in the display circuitry to leak away. We won't be touching that part of the circuit, but it's best tot take precautions.

Turn the machine so that its back is towards you, and undo the six screws marked in the photo:▶ two above the base, two either side of the expansion connector, and two in recessed slots at the top of the display. Put the screws somewhere safe; they'll come in useful later.

STEP 2 — ANATOMY OF A JOYCE

Tip the machine forwards so that the display rests on a cushion, then lift the back of the box gently and squarely upwards. The innards of the machine should be revealed, as shown in the photo. We took the base off as well, but this turned out to be a waste of time.

Most of the space inside is taken up by the display tube. At the base of the box is a fairly standard black and white TV board — without sound or a tuner, obviously. Leave all this alone.

Along the left hand side of the box, near the disk drive, is the main computer circuit — a deceptively simple board with a sophisticated video/memory controller chip inlayed near the centre. The eight 'spare' memory sockets are in a row near the bottom of the machine.

You can perform the upgrade without removing this board, but it is much easier if you unplug it and remove it from the slot frame that supports it.

B

A

The inside of your Joyce.

STEP 3 — BARING THE BOARD

A Unplug the grey multi-way disk control cable, and the group of power supply wires that also go to the drive. Both unplug at the drive end. Avoid repeatedly bending the wires where they meet the circuit board.

B Ease the white power supply plug away from the top part of the board, and undo the two connectors clipped at the bottom. Don't tug at these connectors — examine them to see how they clip — and then ease them off, without bending the circuit board. This sounds difficult, but it isn't. Just remember, if it takes force, you're doing it wrong!

A notch in the top edge of the board, near the back of the disk drive, holds it in its slot. A clip fits into this notch, you can release it by moving the catch shown in the photo. When all the wires are free the board will slide up the slot and out from the computer.

Baring the board!

Ready to attack the back of the Joyce!

PHOTOS: Graeme Kidd



STEP 4 — THE SWITCHES

Four switches, labelled A to D. near the middle of the circuit board tell the machine how much memory it can use.

This is the point where a few readers could be disappointed — very early machines used wire links, rather than switches, and it's not possible to upgrade those without making changes to the board. There are six links, marked A to D and two unmarked; A should be re-routed to the top unmarked link, and C to the bottom unmarked link. We've not been able to find one of these rare machines, so we can't advise further; however a firm called Micro-Bridge (0904 39449) will upgrade the memory and fit switches as required, for £50.

Assuming you've found the switches, the changes are very straightforward. A 256K machine uses the settings ON/OFF/OFF/ON, as shown in the second photo.

The third option — setting all the switches to OFF — is rather fiendish: it gives you a Jekyll and Hyde computer, which behaves as a 512K machine when turned on from cold, and a 'standard' 256K model if reset with Shift, Extra, Esc. This might be useful if you find badly-behaved software that can't cope with the extra RAM—in practice we have yet to find such a program.

The four all important switches, labelled A, B, C, and D

STEP 5 — RAMMING HOME THE RAM

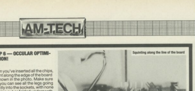
The eight memory chips fit into the sockets at the side of the board, next to the original 256K. Each chip contributes one bit at 256K addresses, so you need eight chips to get 256K eight-bit bytes.

It is absolutely vital to get all the chips the right way round. A small notch or dot will be carved into one end of the chip — generally on the left as you read the text on the back — and that mark should be at the end of the chip nearest the middle of the board when the component is plugged in. If you're confused, take guidance from the eight chips already in place.

Slot the chips in evenly, easing one side part-way into the socket and then inserting the other row of legs. Rest the board flat on a surface as you do this. If the chips are supplied with their legs splayed, as is common, you'll need to bend the legs inwards slightly by rocking the side of the chip against a worktop before you try to plug them in.

Don't force the chips — you may have buckled one of the legs, in which case violence not going to help — and you should un-plug the chip and start again. Push each chip into the socket until it is at the same level as the original 256K component alongside.

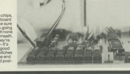
MAHJONG
An Aesthetic Alternative
6128 Compatible
£6.95 inc p&p 021·743·7609 cheque or p.o. to:
LIFFSOFT
52 Garretts Green Lane, Yardley, Birmingham B26 2HP





STEP 6 — OCCULAR OPTIMISATION!

When you've inserted all the chips, squint along the edge of the board as shown in the photo. Make sure that you can see all the legs going directly into the sockets, with none hanging out or folded underneath. Make another check that they're all pointing the same way — it's easy to get this wrong. For good measure, go back to the switches and check that they're at the end of their travel in the required positions.


Squinting along the line of the board

STEP 7 — RE-ASSEMBLY

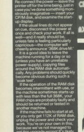
Most instructions glibly say 're-assembly is the reverse of the above procedure' at this point, but not AMTIX! When you're a thousand per cent sure that you've got everything right, slide the circuit board back into its slot and replace the wires.

The blue edge of the disk cable should be at the top, for every connection. The top drive power cable — a small bundle of wires — goes to the top drive; the lower one remains unconnected, unless you've got a twin-drive system.

The big white power connector should have a brown wire at the top and a yellow one at the bottom. At the other edge of the board, the black clip-on connector goes nearer to the back of the computer than the blue one. Both are designed so that only the hopelessly violent can put them on back-to-front.

The only free-dangling wires should be the ones to the second disk — a ribbon cable continued from drive A, and a power cable from the main board.

Finally, you can replace the back of the machine, making sure that the expansion card-edge protrudes in the right place. The two longest screws go into the holes at the top; the two smallest go either side of the expansion connector; and the last two fit above the base. Squeeze the machine a little when you've replaced the screws, to make sure that everything's done up tightly.



STEP 8 — THE ACID TEST

Re-connect the power — leave the printer off for the time being, just in case you've done something monstrously imaginative — insert your CP/M disk, and examine the start-up display.

If the usual lines do not appear on cue, disconnect the power at once and check your work. If all is well—and it really should be, unless fate is feeling particularly capricious—the computer will cheerily announce '368K drive M:'

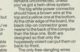
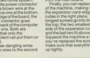
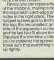
It is a good idea to leave the machine running for a day or so (unless you have an unreliable power-supply), copying files around the RAM disk automatically. Any problems should quickly become obvious during such a 'soak test'.

If the operation of the RAM disk becomes intermittent with use, or the machine sometimes starts up with less than the full 368K, your RAM chips are probably faulty and should be returned or tested in another machine.

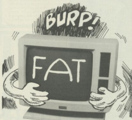
If the machine fails to start at all, or you only get 112K of RAM disk, unplug the power and check your work. You're on your own in this, because we've not managed to get this upgrade wrong! It's likely that you've inserted a chip wrongly, forgotten a connector or mis-set the switches.

Amstrad claim that user-performed upgrades are unreliable and may not work on all machines. Of course, they've got a vested interest in such a view. We've had no trouble with ours, and we have spoken to dealers who have performed many upgrades and never encountered a problem.

Good luck, anyhow!

The boot up screen after the successful exercise



DOMAIN

ROY JONES ***delves further into public domain and finds out how vast the range is***

One of the main problems with public domain software is that there is so much of it. There are some 600 disks of CP/M material and 800 for IBM PC/MSDOS, wading through this amount of material can be quite a task. In this issue we have a summary of some of the best of the public domain programs and where to find them. The rather cryptic volume names ie **BOOG, KUG** etc refer to the library name. BOOG for example is British Osborne Owners Group and KUG is Kaypro Users Group. Although these volumes were originally intended for these particular machines the programs on them are not usually machine specific. In general the languages and utility programs mentioned should not need any modification or setting up, mostly they will run straight away on any CP/M or CP/M plus machine. Communications programs however do need to be set up for the particular machine they are to run on. Public domain programs, unlike commercial programs, often come with source code so you can modify them to suit your machine if needed.

UTILITIES

The public domain libraries have probably more utility programs than anything else. Some of these utilities are real musts because they can save hours and generally make life a lot easier. Quite often there may be several versions of the programs mentioned. You may have to try more than one version to get what you want but at around £2.00 per volume this is not too much of a burden.

DISK EDITORS

DU is my favourite, it allows editing of any sector of the disk plus search facilities and many other functions. The latest version 8.9 can be found on **BOOG volume 55** and will run on CP/M 2.2 or CP/M plus.

There are quite a few other disk editors, some of these may be slightly easier to use than DU but most of these others need to be set up with the right screen control codes. DU so far has run on any CP/M machine I have tried it on without modification.

LIBRARY ARCHIVERS.

These are programs which allow a number of small files to be combined into one large file. Files so archived can be individually extracted later if required. The files produced by these programs can be identified by their **LBR** filename extension. These LBR files are gaining popularity as a method of distributing software as disk space usage is minimised and related files can all be kept together as a sort of composite lump. Probably the main application for the average user would be as a way of saving disk space for little used files. The best of the programs for making and handling these archive files is **NULU**. The latest version of which is to be found on **BOOG volume 58**.

FILE TRANSFER UTILITIES

Newsweep or **NSWP**, as it is usually called, really is a masterpiece. Once you have used this program you will not want to be without it. NSWP combines the major functions of **PIP** & **STAT**, but is much easier to use, and has the ability to squeeze and unsqueeze files. (Squeezing is a method of compressing files so they take less disk space.) NSWP and its accompanying documentation can be found on **BOOG volume 44**. For those with single drive systems try **SWOPCOPY** on **BOOG volume 20**, this allows single or all files to be copied and prompts for the disks to be inserted as required.

COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMS

I have found public domain communications programs generally better than their commercial equivalents, particularly for downloading software from bulletin board systems. There are a huge range of these programs available for all kinds of computer and they are undergoing continual development, with new versions being continually added. The programs mentioned here are among the best known and Amstrad versions are available. **Modem 7** is probably the best known of all although a relative newcomer to the PD scene, called **MEX** (from Modem Executive) is rapidly overtaking it in popularity. Versions of Modem 7 and MEX are available ready configured for most of the Amstrad machines. **CPMBBUK volume 33** has MEX and MODEM 7 for the Amstrad 6128 and another version for the 464 is available on **UK vol 27**. As well as for use with a modem these communication programs can be employed to transfer files between machines by connecting the RS232s together. Both programs support Xmodem protocol so that binary (.COM) program files can be transferred.

LANGUAGE

The public domain contains quite a variety of these. Sometimes there may be two or three version on different volumes and you may have to try a number of them to get the version that suits your needs.

Forth:- **Forth 83** is on **BOOG 40** & **41**, **MVP Forth** with tutorial is on **CPMBBUK 30**, **FIG Forth** is on **UK volume 6** and another version is on **KUG 50**.

Algolm & **FIG Forth** are both on **AP volume 16**. **EBasic** is on **KUG 26** to **28** (a three volume set). A good small C compiler with floating point math is available on **AP volumes 1, 2** & **3** (a three volume set) and to test our your C programs or learn the language there is a C interpreter on **CPMBBUK 25**.

For Cobol enthusiasts the **NPS Cobol Compiler** is on **BOOG 49**. I have found 3 pascal compilers in the public domain for CP/M, **BOOG 4** & **5** have a Pascal compiler, **KUG 48** & **49** contain a full **JRT Pascal** with linker and documentation. For those interested in artificial intelligence a version of LISP called **XLISP** can be found on **SIGM 118** and **PROLOG** is on **SIGM 242**.

There are a few other languages available:- Stoic & Pistol, both Forth like languages, Pilot a teaching language, REC Regular Expression Compiler and some more obscure languages.

ASSEMBLERS, DIS ASSEMBLERS & CROSS ASSEMBLERS

This is one area where the public domain is almost too well provided. Various examples exist for 8080, Z80, 8086, 1802, 6800, 68000, 6505, Z8, 9995 and 6502 CPU's. There are dozens of them but well worth a try for Z80 is **Z8E** on **SIGM 239** and **ZMAC** on **BOOG 36**.

TEXT EDITORS & WORDPROCESSORS

My favourite in this category is called **VDO**, it uses the same commands as *Wordstar* and also has many of *Wordstar*'s facilities, however it does not provide for right hand justification or formatted printing. Also it does not allow editing of files larger than about 50K. It produces standard ASCII files and so is ideal as an editor for program source files. **Express** is a similar type of editor but is more angled for the programmer. To produce high quality document type formatting or for mailmerge type functions either of these can be used with a text formatter program such as **ROFF**. A version of VDO for the 8256 and 6128 can be found on **CPMBBUK 39**, for other machines it will need to be installed. This should not be too much of a problem as the same disk contains an install program allowing various computer types to be selected. **EXPRESS** is on **CPMBBUK 33** and **ROFF** on **BOOG 45**.

OTHER ITEMS

If you really want to delve into the public domain you can't do better than order the Public Domain Software Interest Group's catalogue disks. The CP/M material is catalogued on three volumes (a volume by the way is up to 240K in size) and also includes **NSWP** mentioned above and a very handy program called **FIND**. The Find program allows searching of the catalogue for any desired subject by name and produces a list of the volumes which contains any matching items, really a help with so much material. You can get these catalogues by sending three formatted disks and £6.50 (If you are thinking of upgrading to the new 16 bit Amstrad, MSDOS equivalents of the programs mentioned are also available.) to:- **The Public Domain Software Interest Group, 138 Holtye Road, East Grinstead, Sussex RH19 3EA**, or if you have a modem and communications you can download a short-form version of it from one of their bulletin board systems which can be contacted on **0895 420164, 0895 52685** and **0342 315636**.

GOING LOCO LOCOSCRIPT

Author, MIKE GERRARD, examines LOCOSCRIPT and concludes there is no reason why it should drive you Loco!

There's no doubt *LocoScript* is a terrific word processing program, and for many people it's superior to the likes of *WordStar* and *NewWord*, particularly with its ability to group files under the various headings that you might need, and therefore allow you to have the different layouts that are appropriate to letters, invoices, memos, articles or whatever, all on the one disk.

Compared to other such programs *LocoScript* is extremely friendly, with its pull-down menus and its three different methods of setting features like underline, italics and so on. What isn't quite so friendly is the by now notorious manual. Even apart from its approach, which many newcomers to computing find too high-powered, assuming as it does that you already have a degree of knowledge (and preferably a computing degree at that), it treats its information in several unusual ways, some it omits completely (have you looked up the STOP key in the index?), some it hides away (would you put the screen-dump feature in the chapter called 'Setting up a Group Template'?), while others are misleading, incomplete or contradictory. If you've been tearing your hair out trying to understand some of the features in the manual, this article may hopefully clear up some of the problems. Besides, who wants bald readers?

THE STOP KEY

To start with let's look at the STOP key, at the very top-left of the keyboard, which the manual assumes you'll stumble across yourself, though it doesn't tell you what to do with it once you've found it. This is similar to the CAN key, by which you take back an option you've called up but decided you don't want, except that STOP works once the action has been selected and put into motion. In effect it only works when you're editing, and it won't halt the printer or a disk operation, but it is useful, for example, if you've decided you want to send the cursor to the end of the document but inadvertently press the keys to send it to the start instead. Rather that sit there cursing the cursor and watching the screens scroll by (though with *LocoScript* that's more a case of stroll by), press the STOP key and the cursor stops wherever it happens to be. Pressing ENTER allows the cursor to continue its merry progress, while pressing STOP a second time halts it permanently and return you to editing mode, therefore allowing you to send the cursor in the right direction.

Although STOP won't affect the printer (press PTR to halt it in mid-print) what can easily affect it are the settings you put into the header and footer zones. Most of the sample templates you're provided with on the *LocoScript* disk contain a very wide header zone of nine lines. The manual tells you that naturally you can alter this to suit your own needs, and most people would probably want to reduce this slightly to avoid all that space at the top of every page — it's rare that you'd use more than a single line of text in a header. What the manual doesn't tell you is that there has to be a minimum header zone setting of six lines. If you enter a lesser figure (and *LocoScript* allows you to do this) the page settings are thrown into confusion and the last few lines of actual text on your page will be printed out on the top of the following page. There are other ways that this can happen, but if it has been happening to you then you should certainly have your header examined.

FOOTER TROUBLE?

For a long time I had footer trouble myself. In writing magazine articles it's common practice to finish the piece by putting your name on the penultimate line and ENDS in the centre of the final line. By inserting these two lines in the footer to go at the end of the final page, it saved me the monumental task of typing them into each and every article. Unfortunately *LocoScript* persisted in printing the final ENDS at the top of a separate page, and after lengthy experiments where I numbered and counted each line of text and each line of header and footer I discovered what was happening. Anything after line 67 in a standard 70-line page is for some reason carried over to the next page. If you therefore have two lines of footer text and you are using double-spacing and you set the first line to print on line 66 then the second line which should go onto line 68 will appear on its own at the top of the following sheet.

If you've been paying close attention to the manual you'll no doubt be even more confused by what I've just said. The manual tells you to work out which line you want your footer text to begin on by counting upwards from the bottom of the page and entering a figure of three, five or whatever into your footer zone. Oh yes? Have you tried it? If you have a full page of text then you'll realise that your footer is also being printed half-way down, immediately after the text finishes. Funny place for a footer, you might think. What's happening is that *LocoScript* is trying to print the footer on line three, or whatever line you've entered, but as this is occupied by text it has to wait till the page has finished and enter the footer on the first available line. The correct setting for your footer zone is the actual line number on which you want it to appear, ie line 67 rather than line three. Ignore the manual on this one.

You can't really blame the manual for not covering all the little tips you can pick up for making life easier, and one of these I've found useful is when using the Direct Printing mode. You know that this mode allows you to use the PCW more as a typewriter, and what you type on the screen is not printed out till you press RETURN. If you're typing a line at a time then this is no problem, or if you're doing several full lines then word-wrap will apply until you do press RETURN. What happens with something like an address, though, where each line is short of a full line? You should be aware that even when Direct Printing you can still use features such as CUT and PASTE, so if you've written a letter to someone and want to print out the address on a label or direct onto an envelope then COPY the address of the addressee from the letter you've written as a Phrase, and then go to the Direct Printing and PASTE in the Phrase, carriage returns and all. Then press RETURN and the whole address will be printed out for you.

IRRITATING

A slightly irritating feature about the Amstrad is that there is no gap between a word and its underline which doesn't look too attractive, but there is a way round this for headings. After putting the heading, switch to a Line Spacing of half, then place a row of underlined

WITH T?

blanks beneath the letters in the heading. This results in a neat line not too far beneath the words themselves. Don't forget to switch back to your previous line spacing, though — a Line Space of half is not recommended for writing text!

Also not recommended is running out of space on your disk, as although this isn't disastrous it does seem to cause problems to people and there's always the risk of losing files. You can in fact get a 'Disk Full' message when there seems to be plenty of room left on the disk, and this could be caused by the fact that LocoScript only allows you to have 64 files on one disk (again, not mentioned in the manual.) In my work I can't imagine ever coming anywhere near that number of files, but if you use the machine to write lots of short documents then it is a possibility. You'll either have to accept the limitation and open a new disk or merge some of the shorter documents together.

FILLING SPACE

The more common way of filling up the space on a disk is when you come to save a file you've been editing. Once again you may be confused by the fact that you appeared to have more than enough room when you started the operation. To understand what's going on, you need to know what happens when *LocoScript* saves a file. Let's suppose you have a file that's 15K long, which I'll refer to as Version One, and you want to add a small amount of information to this, amounting to just 1K. You have 10K of room left on the disk, so everything, you think, should be in order — plenty of room left on the disk, so everything you think, should be in order — plenty of room for adding that extra 1K. Not so, I'm afraid. When you go to save Version Two of your file, now 16K long, *LocoScript* quite sensibly leaves Version One where it is until it knows that Version Two is safely saved.

What you're trying to do is save a 16K file into the 10K of space remaining on the disk, and obviously *LocoScript* can't do that. It therefore saves as much as it can, and then asks you to create room on the disk to enable it to save the rest of the file. You will be returned to the Disk Management Screen where you will notice that the file you were working on now has its file type (the last three characters of the name) as £££, indicating a 'phantom' file. This cannot be edited, and what you must do is move a file or files into the RAM disk, files that in total must amount to 16K, thereby giving you the room that you need to save Version Two. Version One will be wiped out, and you will have 9K of space remaining on the disk. Copy the files that you moved to the RAM disk onto another physical disk as soon as possible — you do always have a formatted disk to hand, don't you? Then you can sort out which files are going to go where. The rule on this one, in short, is always to have twice as much room on the disk as the file you're currently working on will occupy.

PCW USER

I recently read of a PCW user who filled up his disk with one file that eventually was 92K long. When he tried to save his newly edited version, naturally there was no room on the disk for his new version and his old version. *LocoScript* went into the routine that asked him to make room on the disk by moving another file. Sadly for this user he didn't have another file to move, and so he was trapped. For this reason, always keep your files down to a manageable length, say no more than about 20K each, and then put them together into one longer file using the 'Insert Text' option should you want to print them out in one session.

Despite the manual's attempts, *LocoScript* needn't drive you loco if you know what you're doing — users who think they might be in danger of suffering from LocoScript fatigue are recommended to try joining the **PCW Users Group at 37 Clifford Bridge Road, Binley, Coventry CV3 2DW**. Their monthly newsletter contains complaints and cures alike.

Mike Gerrard is the author of 'Using the PCW8256', published by First Publishing Ltd at £9.95

Ocean go for a Laser hat-trick!

Following on from the success of LASER BASIC and LASER COMPILER, LUKE HAYTER tests Ocean IQ's latest offering and finds it's sheer Laser Genius.

The latest release, for the Amstrad range of machines, on the Ocean IQ label is a machine code development system, written by Oasis Software, called *Laser Genius*.

The suite of programs is an editor, an assembler, a monitor and an analyser. For your money you get a large video style box that contains two cassettes; on one there is the assembler related programs and on the other the monitor related ones, and the *Laser Genius* manual.

For both the beginner and the more experienced programmer the manual is easy to read, although it is not a tutorial in machine code programming. Each of the programs has its own part in the manual and within each part are sub-sections. Command explanations and how best to use commands are easily read and understood. Detail is not left out and the more experienced programmer is given all the technical information he could want. As with most utilities of this nature, the better your understanding/knowledge of machine code and assemblers, the sooner you will become competent with *Laser Genius*.

There are several assembler programs available that cater for all levels of ability and requirements between them. This assembler caters for all levels by the use of loading options.

An easy to use and very powerful editor and two pass assembler are the basic option. To this can be added a set of commands that allow programming in Phoenix which has similarities to the programming language 'C'.

ODD EDITOR?

At first use the editor seems quite strange because it isn't based on the normal Amstrad BASIC. Each line number may have a group of instructions, called a 'phrase', all nicely spaced for you automatically. A phrase is edited like a small text file on a word processor. The screen contents are buffered and this allows you to scroll off the screen and review old listings of your program and how you have altered them. My only complaint is that it is not possible to insert a line of text between the line number and the first instruction of a phrase. This can be overcome by making the first line a comment line with a ';'. With this system, the added bonus is improved readability due to the phrases being separated.

Text entered in a phrase is checked for syntax errors when ENTER is pressed, like Sinclair BASIC. Any erorrs occurring are reported, a an error message being inserted into the phase, above the line containing the mistake, and the phrase is displayed for editing. Immediate correction isn't essential, you can finish entering your program and then go back to remedy the syntax mistake.

Commands for block line deletion, copying, moving and re-numbering; text search and replace; printer settings; saving and loading have all been included in the editor. These are standard commands and there is nothing special about them.

Other commands are included for the editing and saving symbol tables produced by the assembler are very powerful and encourage the building of a library of machine code routines. This helps prevent you from having to re-invent the wheel every time you need a certain routine.

The assembler accepts all standard Z80 op-codes and pseudo-op-codes for the generating of workspace and label definitions. Gone are the days of 6 digit labels, each a coded form of a 4 word routine name, this assembler allows labels up to 240 characters long! Assembler directives for listing, printing, generation of code, line counting (a bit like the BASIC **TRACE** command) and pausing during assembly are all available to help control how fast and legibly your program is assembled, and to ease debugging.

Conditional assembly is catered for by the commands *while, * endw, *repeat, *until, cond, else and endc. Macros are fully supported and are very useful.

Phoenix is an integer-based compiled language. It allows you to use arrays, functions, data formatting and accessing without writing lots of very complicated machine code. Based on C (a powerful language often used to write compilers), it can be mixed freely with the assembler and machine code lines of your program. The Phoenix commands are



LETTERTECH

compiled from a library of machine code routines like a normal compiler.

RELOCATABLE MONITOR

The monitor is relocatable (it can reside anywhere in memory) and follows the standard 'front panel' design of most monitors. The screen is split into four different windows. One each for register, disassembly, memory display and entering commands.

Commands for setting and reading register and memory values may be entered singly or on mass. Memory can be sent to the printer, moved and searched or run as a normal program to test/debug a routine. Virtual screens are options to create files that can be used by the assembler.

Debugging is aided by 'single step' mode, 'slow running', 'tracing' and 'breakpoints'. Single step operation executes one operation and then allows you to see the effects on the registers. Slow running updates the display of register values after each instruction. Trace displays the flow of the program. Breakpoints stop the program when they are reached, and are used to examine the registers after decisions in the program have been made.

The Analyser has been designed for use with the breakpoints and is based on the programming language FORTH. Often it is known *where* an error occurs but *why* it is not obvious in that it only occurs sometimes when a particular instruction is reached. The Analyser lets the program continue after a breakpoint has been encountered if a set of conditions are not fulfilled (the error has not occurred this time). The usefulness of this can only be understood completely if you have spent hours trying to find out why that rouge register value only occurs if everything else is operating perfectly and you are single stepping through your program for the twentieth time at 3 am.

It isn't possible within this space to adequately convey all the very useful and helpful commands that this set of programs has over its rivals. Much thought has gone into the design of *Laser Genius* and the sheer power it gives the programmer is only fully appreciated when you need to be able to do something more advanced and discover it already has the options to do so.

This reviewer has spent many happy (?) hours cursing assemblers and monitors as he tries to get his latest routine to work and has always dreamed of *Laser Genius*. I liked this suite of programs and will be putting my old assemblers in the bin.

After the brilliant *Laser Basic* and *Laser Compiler*, **Oasis** have excelled themselves with *Laser Genius*. Three cheers to Ocean and Oasis and may their partnership continue to bear such successes.

[redacted]

Once again GARY LIDDON casts an eye over some of the technical letters received during the month, and answers the various queries. If you would like to contribute thoughts relating to the AMTECH section of AMTIX! whether it be comments on articles already published, or thoughts on products available, or if you have any problems using any hardware or software write now to AMTECH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 IDB.

INFORMATION NEEDED

Dear Sir,
I own a CPC6128 and am relatively proficient in machine code. Recently I have wanted to use the second bank of 64K for strorage but cannot find any literature about how to use the paging mechanism. Also I would like to find out how CP/M Plus puts the screen in a bank which does not interfere with the CP/M memory map. There is no information in Soft 158 or Soft 158a and the manual just says the banks are there, not how to get at them.
Tony Hoyle, Marple, Cheshire

If you load the accumulator with the bank to be paged in and then call &BD5B the bank paged will appear in the 16K block from &4000 to &8000. You can then mess about as much as you want with this lump of mem and when finished page back in the natural 16K block that sits there. By the time this little bit of info reaches your Amstrad it will have produced the complete 6128 firmware specification which will explain bank switching in gory tecnhincolour detail.

FRIED TRANSISTORS?

Dear Amtech,
I have a Sony KX20PS1 monitor which I would like to use with my Amstrad 6128. I have an MP2 Power Supply for the computer itself. So far, so good. I am told by my Sony dealer that I may feed the RGB section of the monitor through its rather daunting looking 21 pin Scart socket, the other end of the cable terminating in an innocent looking DIN plug (6 pin) which I am tempted to plug into Arnold's equally inviting DIN output. The connector sold me is for feeding the Sony monitor from the output of a video recorder. Intuition tells me I should not hook up the cable, as it is, in caser I end up with some nicely fried output transistors. What do you think?
William H Pitt, Cardonald, Glasgow

Putting a socket into a plug is not the sort of thing I'd recommend at all, this sort of activity neatly fried my friend's BBC's innnards. If you can get hold of a scart plug (not an easy task I'm told though your Sony dealer could probably help), a DIN plug and some cable it should be fairly easy to make one up yourself. Get a diagram detailing the scart's inputs and have a quick look at the Amstrad's video sockets pin out (such info can be found in the manual). Connect RGB and ground and the only trouble now is sync. Apparently scart has several different syncs and you can try each one until, through trial and error, the correct one is found. If not a soldering iron wielder yourself then a trip down to the local electronics shop accompanied by pin outs for both scart and Straddles should soon have your problem solved.

CARTRIDGE WAS AT FAULT ON PRINTER

Dear Amtech,
Having read issue 7 (May) I came across the letter by Brian Bishop with regards to his problems over the DMP2000 printer and ribbons. I had the same problem until I started to take one of the offending cartridges apart. Inside the right cartridge (looking at the printer) there is an ink pad which dries very quickly if it is in a warm room. However, if you use stamp pad ink (black) and put a small amount on the pad inside the cartridge, leave it to soak for about 10 minutes, then re-insert it in the printer. You should find it prints as good as new.

Also I have not found any trouble in getting replacement ribbons in this area. In fact on my last trip to a local shop to get some disks I was informed they had quite a few ribbons in stock. I hope this information will help other users with the same problem. I must say I am surprised Mr Bishop has had the trouble he mentioned with regards to the instructions that come with the printer. I have had my printer since last November and up to now it has done everything I have asked of it. Up to now I have produced over 100 styles of typeface on my 2000 and I have found it to be more versatile than my old Epson RX 80. This letter has, in fact, been produced using Protext and the DMP2000 using NLQ print. For £160 what more can you ask for at today's prices? If Mr Bishop cares to contact me at my address, 38 Berkeley Square, Warblington, Havant, PO9 2RT I will supply him with ribbons, providing he sends the necessary money. Keep up the good work at AMTIX!
J B Palmer, Warblington, Havant

There's nothing I can add to this letter so we shall pass to the next one.

NO COMPLAINTS WITH MY PRINTER

Dear Sir,
In reply to the letter published in the May issue of AMTIX! titled 'Moans about the DMP2000 printer' can I add that I have recently purchased a DMP2000 and think it is great. The ribbon which came with it was printing very well, and is still going strong after over 515 page listings and many other print outs. They do last! Try altering the print head height to darken the print. The ribbons are easy to buy if you go to John Lewis in the St James Centre in Edinburgh, as they had many in stock when I was last there.
Cameron Baptie, Wilton Park Road, Hawick

Well Mr Bishop's letter has certainly stirred up a hornets' nest of happy DMP2000 owners, there were quite a few more letters that Lettertech received stating similar views. I must admit after having a bit of a bash on the machine it seems a more than a reasonable choice for any computer owner looking for a printer, be their computer Amstrad or not.

PLAYING WITH JOYSTICKS

Dear Amtech,
In my local shops recently I have found difficulty in obtaining Amstrad's own joystick, the one with the second port incorporated. This lead me to wonder if it would be possible to re-wire the computer port so I had two sockets. This would also allow two identical joysticks to be used (such as the new one by Cheetah). Is this possible or is additional circuitry necessary?
Robert Hague, Wakefield, West Yorkshire

It is possible to rewire the stick port to incorporate another plug for a second joystick but it is a bit fiddly and not anything I'd recomend for anyone afraid to go near a soldering iron. Frel, however, market a little gadget for use with complete range of Amstrad computers that will provide another port. It costs a mere £4.95 (inc p&p) and is available through both mail order and retail outlets.

DESIGN A FIGHTER AIRCRAFT FOR THE YEAR 2000

Shuffling slowly towards the towering castellated walls of AMTIX! Towers, as dawn breaks over the sleepy hamlet of Ludlow, a comps minion's life is not the expected round of pretty promotion peoples and candlelit dinners with Aunt Aggie. Oh no! Woken at 6.00am by the scream of low-flying Harriers racing from the traffic lights of the nearby RAF Airfield makes Mummy Minion mad whilst for me it heralds an early start to a day sorting out mailbags and adopting a low profile whilst Aunt Aggie hunts for me in the nooks and crannies of my favourite resting places.

Although this does allow for a little excitement to permeate a minion's otherwise humdrum existence, I sometimes wish I was rising early in the morning to leap into the cockpit of one of those sweep wing wonders — to be met with gasps and respect instead of the strange looks and the barely suppressed guffaws as I zig zag down Ludlow high street at low altitude trying to avoid detection by enemy radar and sidewinder traffic wardens as I pilot Malcolm's turbo bathchair down the road to pick up the editor's weekly prescription. It would certainly turn a few heads if I could arrive at the chemists in the driving seat of a Harrier jet with which I have more than a passing familiarity thanks to **Mirrorsoft**'s superb flight simulation *Strike Force Harrier*.

The squadron of people down at Mirrorsoft are quite rightly proud of this shoot em up simulation, and none less than their tireless operations supremo, Pat Bitton, who, in a mood of generosity, has offered up a competition prize of **a day out for two in the company of British Aerospace**, a trip that should certainly keep someone's head in the clouds during the all expenses paid visit. There's also **25 copies of *Strike Force Harrier* plus a poster** to be given to the runners up.

What have you got to do? 'Seasy, right up your creative street. Just commit to paper your exclusive design for THE fighter aircraft for the year 2000. It can be anything you like based on what technologies you think the future will offer. Pop the finished blueprints (maximum size to be A3 that's 300mm x 420mm) into an envelope and plot a course for them to: **HARRIER COMPETITION, AMTIX! MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** to arrive here before the 21 July. Who knows, if the plans are good enough and British Aerospace like the look of it the sky could be the limit!



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NOTABLE FIRST OVER AMSTRAD

Croydon photographer, Vincent Oliver, appears to have achieved a notable first over the mighty Amstrad empire! He has successfully persuaded them to replace his CPC664 computer with a new PCW8256 at no extra cost whatsoever.

Mr Oliver bought the 664 to aid his business. He chose the Amstrad machine because it offered the Digital Research CP/M operating system which, according to Amstrad's advertising, 'permits the user to access the wealth of applications software written to run under CP/M. In addition to the usual CP/M utilities, additional features have been included for the CPC664'.

He searched for CP/M software to run on the CPC664 and found only a handful of the 7,000 plus titles were available for it. He decided to write direct to Alan Sugar pointing out he had bought the computer on the strength of their technical specification advertisement. As he saw it, the advertisement had misled him and as his machine did not live up to expectations he wanted compensation in the form of a full refund for £459.95, or an exchange for a CPC6128 with Supercalc 2, or an exchange for a Joyce.

At first he was advised to contact a software company which, according to Amstrad's group service controller, S J Angel, had a range of titles compatible for the 664. Further research by Mr Oliver showed only seven of the 131 titles listed by the software company were of any use from a business point of view so once again he wrote to Amstrad asking them to exchange his micro.

Back came a polite but firm reply that he should take the matter up with the retailer from whom he purchased the machine. At first the company, Vision Technology Limited, of Croydon, tried to shun the issue but at the beginning of May Mr Oliver fina;lly received a credit note for the full amount which he used to purchase a PCW6128.

Commented Mr Oliver 'Most 664 owners bought their machines to run CP/M software. I think Amstrad misled them and generally gave them a raw deal. The 6128 must haye been at a very advanced stage when the 664 was launched in April last year. I hope other 664 owners will be encouraged by my success and take up the challenge.

DAN DARE'S ALMOST READY

Virgin Games hope to have Dan Dare Pilot of the Future ready for release by August. They describe it as more of an arcade game than an adventure. There are over 100 screen to the game where our futuristic hero has to fight off the attentions of the nasty Treens.



COMPUTER KILLER ELIMINATED

Surveys, carried out by leading manufacturers, have shown 60% of computer downtime is caused by static electricity and this has led Rochdale based Integrity Solutions to launch a unique anti-static device to protect equipment and data.

The 'Static Buster' constantly takes static electricity away from a screen, keyboard, storage drive or other device, without needing any intention once installed. It costs £49.95.

The system consists of a tiny unit with two leads, each with a pick-up head which attaches to an earth point. The unit acts like a static sponge, soaking upo static charges from the device and diverting them safely to earth.

NEW M D FOR NORTHERN COMPUTERS



A man, who was appointed the first salesman for Sinclair Radionics in 1969, has been appointed managing director of Northern Computers, the Frodsham based company. David Park, who was Sir Clive Sinclair's right hand man, will have responsibility for all overseas sales and distribution of the company's Amstrad network and hartd disk system products.

Northern's international arm is based at York and will export hard disk and network systems in Western Europe, Scandanavia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Australasia and North America.



FIGHTING THE FLAB GALCORP STYLE

Those of you who have been curious as to how those heroes of Galcorp relax when they're not making cities safe on Tau Ceti III will soon have the chance to find out thanks to **CRL**'s next release, *Room 10*. The game goes by this unusual name because of tradition. Apparently, the Galcorp crews relax by participating in a sport called Glyding. Traditionally, room 10 of a Galcorp complex is reserved for this sport, hence the title.

Glyding itself is a low gravity sport for two players. Each controls a transparent 'bat' and uses it to propel a ball to the player at the other end of the room. The object is to get passed the other player, hit the wall behind and score points. It's rather like 3D Pong.

The game uses four colour graphics (with selectable colour schemes), split screen view, two and zero player options, three skill levels and six ball speeds. The game's author is Pete Cooke, the man responsible for *Tau Ceti*. Unfortunately our preview copy arrived just too late for this issue but we should be able to give a full review of *Room 10* next month.

CRL ADVENTURES FOR THE 8256

CRL have released two adventure games, Blackstar and SAS Raid, for the PCW 8256. The former is a text adventure and the object of the quest is to return the power orb to Lady Artemis. Any treasures found on your journey can be kept, after Artemis has cleansed them of their evil.

In SAS Raid, which is a semi-graphic adventure, secret plans have been stolen which give precise details of your base and are now being held in a castle. You have one hour to gain access to the castle and return the plans to your base.

Both programs cost £14.95.

PASCAL AND FORTRAN FOR JOYCE

Prospero Software has announced low cost versions of its Pro Pascal and Pro Fortran compilers for the PCW8256. The two products will cost £75 each and are available through Software Toolshop, the Dunstable-based utility software distributor.

PAGEMAKER MAKING HEADLINES

Following a three month delay the headline-making publishing package, AMX Pagemaker, is now available for the Amstrad CPC464, CPC664 and CPC6128.

Created by **Advanced Memory Systems** of Warrington, this latest version should have been launched at the Amstrad Show at Manchester but a minor 'hiccup' turned out to be a major hold-up and the company found themselves way behind schedule.

The AMX Pagemaker combines a typesetter, graphics and word processor on two disks for £49.95. It lends itself to letters, posters, menus, in fact anything which needs to be created on A4 size paper.

The company has also made AMX Utilities—support software for the best-selling AMX Mouse, price £14.95 on cassette and £19.95 on disk, and it is available for all three machines. It enables any area of a picture to be stretched, shrunk and scrolled up and down. Also included is a printer driver package which enables pictures to be dumped to all leading makes of printer be it dot matrix or colour.

DIGITAL DRUMS FOR AMSTRADS

Cheetah Marketing of Cardiff are well into production with a digital drum machine for the Amstrad range of computers.

The unit, which is called **Amdrum**, converts the CPC464, CPC664 and CPC6128 into programmable digital drum systems. Using digital recordings of real drum sounds the package achieves a degree of realism found only on specialist equipment which can cost thousands of pounds yet the Cheetah goods cost only £34.95.

A kit of eight different drum sounds is provided with the software and other alternative 'voices' to these can be loaded from cassette/disk. A Latin kit, costing £3.99, and an Electro Kit at £4.99, are being launched at the same time as the system, which simply plugs into the computer and incorporates a lead which connects to a standard home hi-fi system.

A FIRST FOR FIRST!

The **First Software** company have finalised an exclusive licensing agreement with Ashton Tate to launch a low price version of dBase 11 for the U K serious home and business micro markets. The Amstrad version comes on disk and costs £119 including VAT.

JULY IS TOLKIEN MONTH

Melbourne House is turning July into a Tolkien Blockbuster month. They are releasing the repriced and repackaged Hobbit at a price of £9.95. Another highlight of the month will be the release of The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit for the PCW8256.

NEW FROM HISOFT

Hisoft have announced its high level language compilers for the CPC6128, PCW8256 and PCW8512 CP/M plus machines are now being shipped with a set of free library functions to access the Digital Research GSX graphics system. These library functions allow users of HiSoft C and HiSoft Pascal80 to draw lines, plot points, fill areas, and access all the other GSX functions from their own programs. GSX is supplied by Amstrad on each of its CP/M plus machines.

As GSX documentation is extremely difficult to get hold of, HiSoft provides these library routines in SOURCE form and with complete documentation explaining the principles of GSX and how to use it and routines provided to make your programmes take fullest advantage of this powerful graphics system.

Owners of earlier versions of these compilers can upgrade their packages to include the GSX library and documentation by returning them direct to HiSoft together with a cheque for £10.

AID FOR FRUSTRATED JOYCE OWNER

First Publishing have launched a layman's step by step guide to using the PCW 8256. The book entitled 'Using the PCW 8256' is designed to make the newcomer to the computer's word processing system familiar not on;ly with the hardware but also the accompanying LocoScript word processing program.

The book, written by freelance writer, Mike Gerrard, deliberately avoids jargon and assumes the reader has no previous knowledge of computers or word processing. It costs £9.95. For further details read AMTECH.

REPUBLIC SOFTWARE IN UK

Bastille Day, July 14, is the apt date for the launch of a new software company in the United Kingdom. Republic Software, the U K subsidiary of the French leading software house, Infogrames, hopes to storm to success with its first title, Mandragore.

Mandragore is a graphic adventure of mega proportions, containing over 260K of program, necessitating the use of twin cassette pack for the tape versions. The game can be played by up to four players, although one person can control all four characters which make up the team, and these characters can either be preselected for you or you may make your own choice.

For the novice adventurer the game is instantly playable while more experienced enthusiasts will discover a complex world of mediaevil magic,battles and individual heroism. On disk it will cost £14.95 for the Amstrad version.

ATTACK ON MODEMS IN SCHOOLS DECISION

The Department of Trade and Industry's £1 million 'Modems in School' scheme has been attacked by the boss of DataStar Systems. Barry Krite says the department's decision to use just two modems, the Dacom DSL 2123AD and the Tandata TM512, was a rejection of free enterprise.

He is so angry that he has asked his local MP to raise the matter in the House of Commons. 'We have a Conservative government which advocates the merits of free enterprise yet one of its departments is turning its back on the issue.'

Mr Krite's company makes the Magic Modem, and he believes the department should have put the contract out to tender.

AMTIX! USER CLUB NEWS

Welcome once again to the page that lets user clubs write about themselves, offer advice and help to newly formed or planned organisations, notify others of any rip offs, and generally have the opportunity to sound off about anything and everything.

By Malcolm Harding

AMTIX! wants to hear from user clubs the length and breadth of Britain and indeed we welcome correspondence from organisations abroad. Write and tell us how, why and when you set up the club, its aims, when and where it meets, how many members you have, any special events you have planned for the coming year, if you publish a newsletter and if so how frequently it appears. Got the idea? Then get your thinking caps on and write today!

First of all an apology to everyone who has been trying to contact the **Amstrad North West User's Club** at Manchester. For some reason the club's address did a vanishing trick in the May feature. The address is **41 Millwall Close, Gorton, Manchester M18 8LL**. I also have a telephone number, **061-273-2793**. On the subject of ANWUC I would like to thank them for the 'nice' photos they have published of me in their April magazine. Thanks a lot!

ADVANTAGE USER GROUP

This month I am featuring Advantage, the national independent user group for owners of the Amstrad computer. As you will recall this group recently took over Amsclub so it was interesting to hear from **Jeffrey Green**, the owner of Advantage, which is based at **33 Malyns Close, Chinnor, Oxfordshire OX9 4EW**.

Mr Green says the group's aims are to provide an organised centre for all members; provide the means whereby users can share their knowledge; to disseminate and generate new ideas; to help solve problems; to encourage communications between users; to help users get to know their computer more effectively; and to monitor standards of hardware and software products. He also points out his aims would appear to have been copied by ANWUC which is a good point for him as imitation is the best form of flattery when all's said and done.

Immediate objectives of Advantage are to provide a monthly newsletter which will include news, ideas, advice, letters, reviews, classified advertisements and other articles of interest relating to computing. It also sets out to build a database of information, programs, and advice to which members may have access and to which they are encouraged to contribute; and also to provide unbiaised reviews of both hardware and software products. It also gives free publicity to local and national clubs; provides an opportunity for members to express their views, publish ideas, raise problems, and advertise items for sale and finally also offers the chance for members to earn money writing original programs.

Longer term objectives include obtaining proprietary software and hardware at reduced prices; establishing a lending library of quality tested software; provision of a telephone answering service; the setting up of a communications link between members and the centre; and the organisation of local group meetings.

Advantage was formed last year and annual membership for residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland is £8.95. Overseas membership is £13.95 per year. Members receive a newsletter each month and are entitled to discounts on items offered by Advantage.



IS THERE A CLUB FOR DISABLED?

I have received a letter from **M R Pugh** of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan, asking if there is a club or group which caters specifically for disabled people who own Amstrads. I have not heard of one but if there is can they contact me so I can pass on the information.

ANOTHER CLUB DOWN UNDER

It's only a few months since I last featured a club from Australia yet once again AMTIX! is bridging the 13,000 miles to publicise another one down under!

This time the letter is from the **Southside Amstrad Users Club** and their address is **P O Box 324, Gosnells 6110, Western Australia**. Says secretary, **Debbie Hoffman**, 'I am writing to you on behalf of our club in Western Australia. We are the Southside Amstrad Users Club and we meet at the Gosnells Scout Hall on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. We are a socially orientated group with over 70 members. We offer a great deal for both the beginner and the advanced Amstrad user.

'We have an extensive library, available to all members, which has a large range of tapes, disks and magazines available for hire. Our group is interesting and informative, including software and hardware demonstrations and quite often discussions from teachers of computing courses and other leading sources. The committee members, with their Australian telephone numbers, are: president, **John Marshall, 09—3907335**; secretary, **Debbie Hoffman, 09—4598702**; librarian, **Roy Duperouzel, 09—39088865**; treasurer, **Eric Tytherleigh, 09—4579026**'.

Thanks for your letter Debbie. Perhaps one of these days I might call you!

MANCHESTER CLUBS TO MERGE?

I have heard a strong rumour that the Amstrad North West Users Club is in the process of acquiring the Manchester Amstrad User Club. Watch this page for further news!

PEN PAL LISTINGS

I am still receiving requests from readers with regards to a pen pal listing. If you want to have a chat with other readers all you have to do is write in giving your name, address, and/or telephone number, and state any special interests you have in the world of Amstrads. The address, as for all other user club page news, is **Malcolm Harding, AMTIX! User Club Page, PO BOX 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB**.

To set the ball rolling I have had a request from **Ian Menmuir** of Qus, Dunblane, Perthshire FR15 0JY for pen pals. He owns a 6128 and wants to correspond with and/or meet other people so he can swop ideas and so on. Go on write to him now!



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BOUNDING REVENGE

THE PUMPKIN STRIKES BACK is the sub title for the latest release from Palace, CAULDRON II

If you go down to the woods today, you're sure of a quick demise . . . That's the motto for the latest game from Palace, **Cauldron II**. For those who never saw its predecessor, it involved a broomstick-riding witch in her quest to destroy a collection of pumpkins. This game is suitably entitled, **The Pumpkin Strikes Back**. You control the last pumpkin, intent on gaining vengeance for your extinct comrades. The action all takes place within the witch's castle. You can appear in any of a number of rooms and the object is, arcade/adventure style, to collect necessary items which will help you find the witch, cut off a lock of her hair while she sleeps and then drop that lock of hair into a guarded cauldron at the base of the castle. Easier said than done!

There are a variety of obstacles within the palace. Innocent looking inanimate objects soon spring to life and chase you around a room, trying to drain your magical energy. When this reaches zero percent, you lose a life. Other more obvious nasties like giant spiders, trolls, toads, skeletons and even rats all seek to end your quest with alarming fervour. Physical traps, too, make your journey ever more dangerous. To negotiate these difficulties, you're required to master control of the pumpkin — and that's where the fun starts.

The pumpkin bounces from place to place, the height of bounce affected by the length of time the fire button is depressed. The pumpkin responds in rubber ball fashion, squashing as it hits something and then expanding back to full size as it flies through the air.

The graphics take advantage of the Amstrad's sixteen colour mode and stone work and doors are all subtly shaded to add atmosphere. As the pumpkin moves from one location to another, screens flick change rather than scroll. There are some interesting special effects as well, for instance, if the pumpkin falls to its doom outside the castle, you see it tumbling away into the night followed by an explosion as it finally disappears from view.

There is a certain order in which at least some of the objects must be collected if the mission is to be successfully completed but it isn't by any means obvious and doubtless, many attempts are going to be made before the solution is figured out. Roll on Halloween!



FROM MIDNIGHT TO ICEMARK

MIKE SINGLETON'S great 'Midnight' Trilogy is back on the road with part two, DOOMDARK'S REVENGE, soon out from Beyond

Hot on the heels of *Lords of Midnight* which found its way onto the Amstrad at the end of last year, **Beyond** has reached the final stages of converting the famous and, many a Spectrum owner would say, the much better sequel, **Doomdark's Revenge**. **Doomdark** has been defeated following the destruction of the Ice Crown (the objective in *LOM*) but his daughter, **Shareth the Heart Stealer**, has kidnapped **Morkin** the night before the nuptuals he should have shared with Tarithel *The Fey*, daughter of the Lord of Dreams. After all, wouldn't you want to settle into a quiet life after destroying the Ice Crown?

And so, taking the part of **Luxor** *The Moon Prince*, you have to rescue Morkin and then take on Shareth in her domain, the Land of Icemark. Play is carried out in a similar fashion to that in *LOM*, although the plot is more sophisticated and so is the possible interaction between characters. In addition to Luxor, you can control two others initially, **Rorthron** and **Tarithel**. However, once you have rescued Morkin from the malevolent clutches of the frigid cradle-snatcher, he too comes under your control.

The graphics are the same style of simplified, but varied type, that pervaded *LOM* but there are many more locations and views. *Doomdark's Revenge* progresses in the hybrid strategy/adventure format established in Mike Singleton's earlier epic but opens up a whole new can of worms for players. There are new territories, other armies and a new quest to discover. The presentation may have changed in the packaging but on screen, the same lavish script is used and although the first game isn't necessary to complete this, players of the original will find themselves in familiar surroundings.

When a preview copy was brought up to AMTIX! Towers for a brief visit, it appeared that only proper control keys and instructions needed completing so you should expect to see the game fairly soon. For the third part of this trilogy, *Eye of the Moon*, a Christmas release may be possible. Meanwhile, a full review of *Doomdark's Revenge* should appear in the next issue.

CHOP-KLACK-CHOP-KLACK-CHOP-KLACK!

Yet another oriental martial arts action game arrives, this time it's Mirrorsoft's SAI COMBAT

After what seems like a quite period, **Mirrorsoft** is now girding its collective loin with several new titles including *Biggles*, *Strike Force Harrier* and *Spitfire 40* taking to the skies to fight in the big battle of flight orientated software. Back on the ground, however, the latest release, **Sai Combat**, seems destined to lead their attempt to enter the oriental dragon of karate chop em ups. Originally released on the Spectrum, this conversion was done by the game's original author, **David Clark**, and seems to be even better. The graphics, especially, are very colourful as can be seen from our sneaky preview screen shot with the action taking place between two very oriental types, who are involved in a contest of skill to get through 16 levels to become the Sai Master. What they must do is use their skill and agility to vanquish an opponent by utilising a variety of the 16 available moves. The eight joystick direction and fire button make deadly weapons of their staffs and bodies.

The game can be played by two players or one player against the computer. You begin with six lives as does the hon'lable opponent. Beginning as a white belt, you play the part of the contender appearing in the green corner (or at least in the green strides) and the computer plays your opposite number in the red duds. Differing blows score different amounts of damage to you or your opponent which reduces the amount of energy, or *Chi*.

There are sixteen levels to win through before attaining the title of **Sai Master** with at least eight different oriental backdrops against which to chop it out. From what we have seen of *Sai Combat* it looks as if the wait may have been worthwhile. It has convincing animation coupled with good graphics and great attention has been paid to detail, from the colour of the characters' belts changing as progress through the grades is made, to the oriental backdrops that adorn each level. An option at the end of each game means that by using the enter key to restart you can begin at the last level completed instead of having to work your way up from grasshopper status. However, as the orientals may see this as a bit of a western cop-out you must forfeit three of your lives for the pleasure. Well after all, as with all oriental sports, it is the seed that grows in the cold which bears the hardiest fruits. . . . or something like that.


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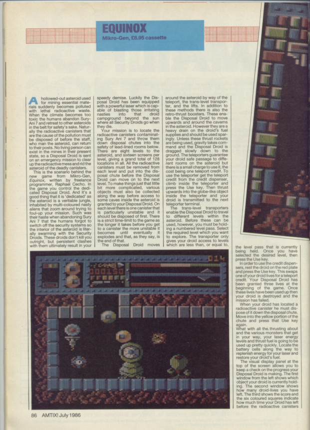
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EQUINOX

Mikro-Gen, £8.95 cassette

A hollowed-out asteroid used for mining essential materials suddenly becomes polluted with lethal radioactive waste. When the climate becomes too toxic the humans abandon Sury-Ani 7 and retreat to other asteroids in the belt for safety's sake. Naturally the radioactive canisters that are the cause of the pollution must be disposed of before the staff, who man the asteroid, can return to their posts. No living person can exist in the mines in their present state, so a Disposal Droid is sent on an emergency mission to clear up the radioactive mess and rid the asteroid of the deadly canisters.

This is the scenario behind the new game from Mikro-Gen, *Equinox*, written by freelance programmer, Raphael Cecho. In the game you control the dedicated Disposal Droid. And it's a good thing that it is 'dedicated' as the asteroid is a veritable jungle, inhabited by multi-coloured nasty aliens that zoom around trying to foul-up your mission. Such was their haste when abandoning Sury Ani 7 that the humans forgot to switch off the security systems so the interior of the asteroid is literally swarming with the Security Droids. These droids don't kill you outright, but persistent clashes with them ultimately result in your speedy demise. Luckily the Disposal Droid has been equipped with a powerful laser which is capable of blasting those irritating nasties into that droid campground beyond the sun where all Security Droids go when they die.

Your mission is to locate the radioactive canisters contaminating Sury Ani 7 and throw them down disposal chutes into the safety of lead-lined rooms below. There are eight levels to the asteroid, and sixteen screens per level, giving a grand total of 128 locations in all. All the radioactive canisters must be removed from each level and put into the disposal chute before the Disposal Droid can move on to the next level. To make things just that little bit more complicated, various objects must also be collected along the way before access to some caves inside the asteroid is granted to your Disposal Droid. On each level there is one canister that is particularly unstable and it should be disposed of first. There is a strict time-limit to the game as the longer it takes before you get to a canister the more unstable it becomes until eventually it explodes and that, as they say, is the end of that.

The Disposal Droid moves around the asteroid by way of the teleport, the trans-level transporter, and the lifts. In addition to these methods there is also the retro-thrust boosters. These enable the Disposal Droid to move upwards and around the caverns in the asteroid. However they are a heavy drain on the droid's fuel supplies and should be used sparingly. Unless these thrust rockets are being used, gravity takes command and the Disposal Droid is dragged slowly down to the ground. The teleporters guarantee your droid safe passage to different rooms on the asteroid but there is a small charge to use it, the cost being one teleport credit. To use the teleporter get the teleport credit from the credit dispenser, climb inside the teleporter and press the Use key. Then thrust upwards into the globe-like object inside the teleporter and your droid is transmitted to the next teleporter terminal.

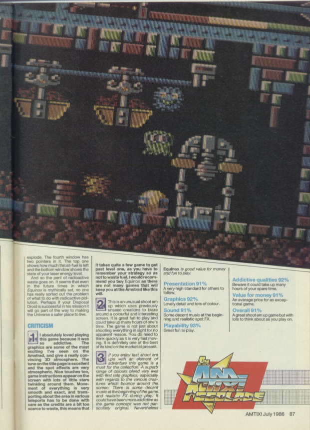
The trans-level transporters enable the Disposal Droid to travel to different levels within the asteroid. Before these can be used, however, you must be holding a numbered level pass. Select the required level which you want to explore. The transporter only gives your droid access to levels which are less than, or equal to, the level pass that is currently being held. Once you have selected the desired level, then press the Use key.

In order to use the credit dispensers, rest the droid on the red plate and press the Use key. This swaps one of your droid lives for a teleport credit. Your Disposal Droid has been granted three lives at the beginning of the game. Once these lives have been used up then your droid is destroyed and the mission has failed.

When your droid has located a radioactive canister he must dispose of it down the disposal chute. Move into the yellow portion of the chute and press that Use key again.

What with all the thrusting about and the various monsters that get in your way, your laser energy levels and thrust fuel is going to be used up pretty quickly. Locate the battery cells along the way to replenish energy for your laser and restore your droid's fuel.

The visual display panel at the top of the screen allows you to keep a check on the progress your Disposal Droid is making. The first window from the left shows which object your droid is currently holding. The second window shows how many droid-lives you have left. The third shows the score and the six coloured squares indicate how much time your Droid has left before the radioactive canisters



explode. The fourth window has two pointers in it. The top one shows how much thrust-fuel is left and the bottom window shows the state of your laser energy level.

And so the peril of radioactive waste goes on. It seems that even in the future times in which *Equinox* is mythically set, no one has really sorted out the problem of what to do with radioactive pollution. Perhaps if your Disposal Droid is successful in his mission it will go part of the way to making the Universe a safer place to live.

CRITICISM

1 **I absolutely loved playing this game because it was so addictive. The graphics are some of the most exciting I've seen on the Amstrad, and give a really convincing 3D atmosphere. The tune on the title page is excellent and the spot effects are very atmospheric. Nice touches too, game instructions appear on the screen with lots of little stars twinkling around them. Movement of everything is very smooth and exact, and transporting about the area in various teleports has to be done with care as the credits are a bit too scarce to waste, this means that it takes quite a few game to get past level one, as you have to remember your strategy so as not to waste fuel. I would recommend you buy** Equinox **as there are not many games that will keep you at the Amstrad like this will.**

2 This is an unusual shoot em up which uses previously unseen creations to blaze around a colourful and interesting screen. It is great fun to play and could take up many hours of one's time. The game is not just about shooting everything in sight for no apparent reason. You do need to think quickly as it is very fast moving. It is definitely one of the best of its kind on the market at present.

3 *If you enjoy fast shoot em ups with an element of adventure this game is a must for the collection. A superb range of colours blend very well with first rate graphics, especially with regards to the various creatures which bounce around the screen. There is some decent music at the beginning of the game and realistic FX during play. It could have been more addictive as the game concept was not particularly original. Nevertheless* **Equinox** *is good value for money and fun to play.*

Presentation 91%
A very high standard for others to follow.

Graphics 92%
Lovely detail and lots of colour.

Sound 91%
Some decent music at the beginning and realistic spot FX.

Playability 93%
Great fun to play.

Addictive qualities 92%
Beware it could take up many hours of your spare time.

Value for money 91%
An average price for an exceptional game.

Overall 91%
A great shoot em up game but with lots to think about as you play on.

SWORDS AND SORCERY

PSS £9.95 cassette, £14.95 disk



Wandering through the chaos, you adjust your grip on the handle of your sword. Cold sweat soaks the fur beneath the palm of your hand making your grip less secure. On your other arm, a shield of battered metal protects the upper half of your bruised body. You want to rest but know that there is no choice — you must go on. There is a door ahead. Forcing it with your shoulder, it swings open. In the gloom of the room beyond you glimpse the outrageous form of a giant snake with a woman's head. Before you can bring down your sword, a light blinds your eyes and the metal weapons seem too hot to hold. You've failed — this time . . .

Enter *Swords and Sorcery* by PSS. Long awaited and even longer proclaimed, the game that says it brings role playing to your keyboard and VDU is here. It's taken a long time but now the idea is that anyone with about ten pounds to spare can travel through a maze of underground labyrinths in search of adventure and fortune. The question is, does the game live up to the claim?

The idea in *S&S* is to journey around four quadrants of an underground maze in search of armour made by the master Armourer Zob. In doing so, your character will encounter a variety of monsters, traps and computer controlled characters — most of whom are intent on thwarting your efforts. In the longer term, more 'add-on' dungeons are in the making for as your character explores and fights, he gains experience. The future dungeons are primarily intended to allow this course to continue.

The packaging is in the form of a large cassette case, and a medium sized A5 manual which explains all the intricacies of play and lists the various magic items, monsters and other miscellaneous objects.

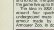
The screen is split up into five main areas. At the top of the screen is a text window carrying messages telling you what your character is holding or the state of a battle and whether or not you just hit your opponent. Below that and on the left another window displays your character's view in animated line graphics. So, as your character progresses down a corridor, you actually see the walls move past. To the right of this is a map of the dungeon quadrant you are currently in. This map also displays your exact location and anything that might be in a corridor. However, it does not reveal anything occupying a room unless you are also in that room.

Below this is a dialogue box where conversations between yourself and anyone else are displayed. Finally, at the base of the screen is a scrolling menu. Actually there are several scrolling menus arranged in a hierarchical fashion. On the main menu, if you selected Talk, another menu would appear with choices like, Greet, Command, War Cry and son on. If Greet was selected, the choice of Friendly, Neutral or Hostile would appear. This control method is somewhat unusual but after playing a while, its logical structure facilitates ease of use.

At the beginning of the game, a new character may be created or a default character may be used. To create a new character, the player is given 14 days in which to train with any of twelve masters. Each master specialises in particular skills. The player picks the master (or masters) with the skills that most appeal and thereby gain their own unique balance of abilities. All the masters appear as names on the scrolling menu, the player pressing fire, when the correct master has been selected.

No wonder that dragons are extinct because Dragon's Teeth are the main form of currency in the world of Midas. After training has been completed, a character is allowed a certain number of DTs with which to buy equipment. Once equipment has been purchased, the character automatically enters the dungeon.

Apart from encountering wandering monsters, each room normally holds a creature or character







and each may be dealt with in different ways.

If an armoured knight approaches, telling you to stand and deliver, a war cry or threat may be sufficient to send him running. Other creatures may enjoy flinging insults for a few minutes before battle commences. Under certain circumstances, creatures may be interrogated as to the value of an item you have collected on your adventure. However you deal with them, interaction with these characters is a major part of the game.

Another major aspect of play is magic. A novice character has only the ability to cast a few Fireball spells. During the game, or after suitable training, it is possible to have an entire arsenal of spells to be used in both offence, defence and as tools. Of course, certain creatures are going to be able to use spells as well.

Combat is normally fore-warned by the sound of a ringing bell. During combat, the map area of the screen is removed to display combat statistics for both parties involved. The only real animation is in the form of a few special effects for spells such as Fireball, when a flash of differing colours hurtle towards the foe. Combat is handled in rounds and each party may pick a choice of attack and defence forms in each round. Also taken into consideration are strengths, armour, weapons and armaments used. In the early stages of the game, should you lose a fight and die, you are usually given an extra life. This benefit does not last for long, however. It is possible to turn and run during a fight but your opponent gains a couple of free hits if you choose to do so. A proper retreat takes time to learn and skill to exercise, therefore such an option has to be earned through experience.

During your adventures there are likely to be many pieces of treasure discovered which are not necessary to complete the game. But there is freedom of movement and choice throughout, so the exact nature of the adventure is left partly to the individual. Options for saving and reloading a game in progress are available and will become necessary for completion of the game. That is, unless you have several months to spend on non-stop playing!

CRITICISM

1 **This is a wonderful game, a superb mixture of strategy and adventure which makes it brilliant in itself. Add to that the excellent graphics and you end up with perfection for the thinking players' society. This is definitely one for the collection even if you are not over keen on this type of game. Hopefully other software companies will follow the lead of PSS and release other masterpieces like this.**

2 What an incredible game this is! You certainly need to have your thinking cap on and a careful perusal of the instructions is a must before delving into the game. If you like to experience the challenge and fun of adventure in the dungeons don't waste a minute in buying *Swords and Sorcery*. The graphics are first rate and probably the hardest part is in coming to terms with a rather elaborate menu system. One of the best games I have played this year!

3 *This is an excellent program from PSS. Obviously, people will compare this computer RPG with Dungeons & Dragons. The game cannot compare favourably with something of that complexity but it's still as complex as other, less convoluted RPGs and it gives the solitary player who cannot get involved in such social interaction games to experience the full thrill of dungeoneering. The trickiest thing to get used to is the menu system. You should spend some time becoming acquainted with its intricacies before trying to progress too far into the game. Otherwise you may think you have done something when in fact you haven't. The variety of creatures is stunning and very cleverly thought out. For those who are interested, it appears that PSS have used a kind of digital version of the old Citadel Miniatures design procedure where a few components of a character can be jumbled in a variety of ways to produce a multitude of different creatures. The only moan I have is that some of the text in the dialogue window is light blue on a yellow background making it nearly impossible to read. Otherwise, the game is superb.*

Presentation 92%
Plenty of options, all clearly laid out in both the manual and on screen.

Graphics 91%
Very clever use of animation and colour.

Sound 72%
sNo music and only a few simple sound effects. Passable though.

Playability 91%
The menu system is very well thought out but will still slow you down at first.

Addictive qualities 93%
An immense dungeon to explore, full of variety and the promise of more to come!

Value for money 93%
A massive game for a reasonable price.

Overall 92%
A great game that's been worth the wait.

SABOTEUR

Durell, £8.95 cassette

Life as a hired gunman has its ups and downs. One minute you might be asked to eliminate someone famous, the next second you're being asked to acquire a computer disk held within a high security fortress cunningly disguised as a warehouse. The disk holds the names of a number of rebel leaders and you're racing against the clock. The idea is to find a bomb, hidden somewhere within the complex, get the disk and leave the bomb behind, ticking down to detonation. All this has to be accomplished before the time limit expires and the information stored on the disk is sent to outlying terminals. Being a sensible sort of chap, you want to escape and there just happens to be a helicopter on the warehouse roof, waiting to be stolen.

Of course there is always a catch and in this case the headquarters are heavily protected by armed guards and watchdogs as well as an automatic defence system which monitors your position in a room and then starts zapping you with a laser. Your mission begins with you in a rubber dinghy moored just off a small pier leading to one of the warehouse entrances. Clad totally in SAS attire, the obligatory black jumpsuit and boot polish all over your face, you are armed with a throwing star. As you wander through the security complex various other weapons can be found, picked up, and used — but each weapon can be used only once. The good thing is they can be aimed at your target. Trained to a very high degree in various martial arts, you can also partake in a bit of physical aggro rather than just lobbing the odd throwing star or brick about. You have a choice too: a killer punch or a Ninja style drop kick are both equally deadly to any guards you may find.

The security complex is split into three sections. The first is the warehouse front, containing the helicopter and primary defence force. If you get down into the sewers then you can link up to the underground train taking you into the first part of the computer centre. From here another underground train has to be found to get you into the second computer centre. This is where the disk and bomb are held. Once the disk has been picked up and the bomb primed a countdown starts showing the remaining time in which to reach the helicopter. A quick dash back through the sewers and train systems is required unless you like having your self smeared all over the walls.

Whilst bashing your way through various adversaries your progress is charted via two screens. The main screen shows a side view of the room you're in. As well as running and fighting you can also perform a nifty tuck jump for bouncing over chasms and gaps. Using the ladders, platforms or steps provided, you travel around the complex of colour coded levels.

The bottom quarter of the screen is used to display your status. Only one object can be held at a time, the object you're holding appearing in a window on the left hand corner of the status area, while objects close by, and available for collection, are shown in the window to the right side of this screen. Pressing fire uses the object within your grasp, or if another object is within reach it'll be transferred into your possession.

An energy bar along the bottom of the screen shows how your energy level is faring. Your life force is exhausted by contact with fighting guards, who fire rubber bullets; guard dogs, which bite, and the laser defence system which is generally bad for your health. Standing about doing nothing for a while, however, allows ebbing energy force to return.

The game is played for money, not points, and a paymeter clocks up a few hundred dollars each time you croak a guard. The big money is only picked up for collecting the disk in the time limit, planting the bomb, and escaping. The programmer was obviously a dog lover for you get no money for killing dogs!

CRITICISM

1 Durell have come up with a fine game which is extremely challenging. There is an initial problem of control but this can soon be sorted out. The graphics are good but the sound leaves a lot to be desired. Overall, well above average.

2 As a masked intruder your job is to steal a disk but the task is made difficult by the fact guards and dogs appear just when you are about to climb a ladder. The graphics are realistic but only a few colours are used and animation is not very smooth. I enjoyed the game because the nine different skill levels ensure even the most novice player has a chance to complete the game.

3 Unfortunately SABOTEUR's graphics are very jerky surely not as smooth as they should have been. The sound is extaordinarily poor and not up to the usual Durell standard. In fact the spot FX are appalling and sound as if they've tested them out on a Spectrum in BASIC. I found that moving around had to be very exact and you could only get down ladders when in one position. If you're a bit undecided about it, then don't buy it!

Presentation 83%
Clear and comprehensive instructions nice title screen and several options.

Graphics 75%
Limited use of colour but graphics are realistic although rather jerky.

Sound 34%
Worst aspect of the game.

Playability 80%
It's a lot of fun especially as the skill levels ease you in.

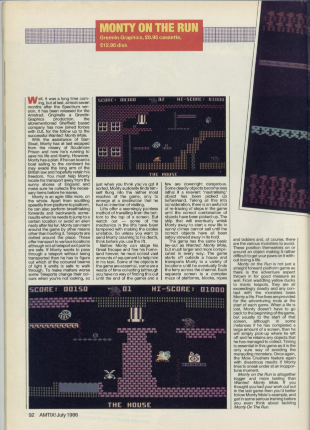
Addictive qualities 77%
Increasing difficulty keeps you at it.

Value for money 75%
For action fans its good for the usual price, but the jerkiness spoils the rating.

Overall 77%
Worth having in your collection for the game despite some audio-visual problems.



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MONTY ON THE RUN

Gremlin Graphics, £8.95 cassette, £12.95 disk

Well, it was a long time coming, but at last, almost seven months after the Spectrum version, it has been released for the Amstrad. Originally a Gremlin Graphics production, the aforementioned Sheffield based company has now joined forces with DJL for the follow up to the successful *Wanted: Monty Mole*.

With the assistance of Sam Stoat, Monty has at last escaped from the misery of Scudmore Prison and now he's running to save his life and liberty. However, Monty has a plan. If he can board a boat sailing to the continent he may evade the long arm of the British law and hopefully retain his freedom. You must help Monty locate his transport away from the sunny shores of England and make sure he collects the necessary items before he leaves.

Monty is an agile little mole, on the whole. Apart from scuttling speedily from platform to platform, he can also perform breathtaking forwards and backwards somersaults when he needs to jump to a certain location or avoid an alien nasty after his fur. Monty can roam around the game by other means other than hoofing it. Teleports are dotted around the place. These offer transport to various locations although not all teleport exit points are safe. If Monty wants to pass through a teleport without being transported then he has to figure out which of the coloured beams of light it emits is safe to walk through. To make matters worse some Teleports change their colours when you're not looking, so just when you think you've got it sorted, Monty suddenly finds himself flung into the nether most reaches of the game, only to emerge at a destination that he had no intention of visiting.

Lifts offer a seemingly painless method of travelling from the bottom to the top of a screen. But watch out — some of the mechanics in the lifts have been tampered with making the cables unstable. So unless you want to send Monty crashing to his death, think before you use the lift.

Before Monty can stage his Great Escape and flee his homeland forever, he must collect vast amounts of equipment to help him in his task. Some of the objects in the game are essential, some are a waste of time collecting (although you have no way of finding this out until the end of the game) and a few are downright dangerous. Some deadly objects become less lethal if a relevant 'neutralising' object has been picked up beforehand. Taking all this into consideration, there is an awful lot of re-tracing of steps in the game until the correct combination of objects have been picked-up. The ship that will eventually whisk Monty away to start a new life in sunny climes cannot sail until the correct objects have all been safely stowed away in its hold.

The game has the same basic lay-out as *Wanted: Monty Mole*, but much larger and more complicated in every way. The game starts off outside a house and transports Monty to a variety of locations until he eventually finds the ferry across the channel. Each separate screen is a complex maze of platforms, blocks, ropes and ladders and, of course, there are the various monsters to avoid. These position themselves on or around an object making it rather difficult to get your paws on it without losing a life.

Monty on the Run is not just a straight forward platform game as there is the adventure aspect thrown in for good measure as well. From waddling yellow ducks to manic teapots, they are all exceedingly deadly and any contact with the monsters loses Monty a life. Five lives are provided for the adventuring mole at the start of each game. When a life is lost, Monty doesn't have to go back to the beginning of the game, but usually to the start of that screen, although in some instances if he has completed a large amount of a screen, then he will simply pick-up where he left off and he retains any objects that he has managed to collect. Timing is essential in this game as it is the only sure way of avoiding the marauding monsters. Once again, the Mole Crushers feature again with disastrous results if Monty tries to sneak under at an inopportune moment.

Monty on the Run is altogether bigger and more testing than *Wanted: Monty Mole*. If you thought you had your work cut out in the last game then you'd better follow Monty Mole's example, and get in some serious training before you even think about tackling *Monty On The Run*.



CRITICISM

1 I didn't really get on that well with this game although I can see that with a bit of persistence I could become quite addicted, especially as Monty is such a cute character. The graphics are quite good fun, but the nasties seemed almost impossible to defeat. Monty really should have been equipped with a powerful laser. Still for all that it will provide hours of fun.

2 Before this game came out I had heard rumours of its excellence and I have to say that having played it, for once, the rumours were true! It is well defined, graphically, and the colour is finely done. If anything it is a little too easy to play, after initial practice, but it is extremely addictive and great fun. Once again Gremlin Graphics have come up with a winner.

3 *If you have seen any previous games from Gremlin Graphics you will know their product is first rate. This game is no exception with superb graphics and well mixed colours which all help make the game most enjoyable. The music has come not from the Spectrum but from the Commodore version and the merry tune adds to the enjoyment. It is a great challenge to complete but once you have achieved this feat the addictivity could fade. Still it's excellent value for money.*

Presentation 91%
A high standard from Gremlin.

Graphics 92%
Smooth and fun.

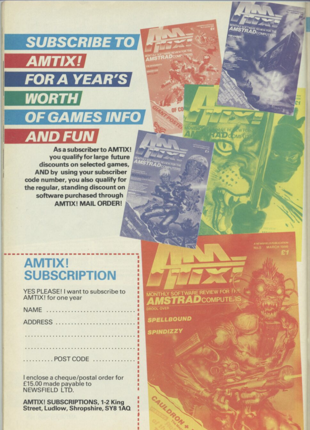
Sound 92%
A nice merry tune.

Playability 92%
The simple idea grows on you.

Addictive qualities 91%
The desire to see the next screen layout urges you on and you want to complete the game before going to bed.

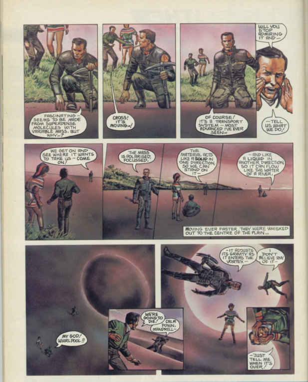
Value for money 89%
Fine game for the usual price.

Overall 91%
Certainly a great follow up for Monty fans.



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Update:
Marooned on an alien world and with a desperate quest on your hands you are inclined to take all offers of help that come your way. Even if an offer comes from someone or something pretty nasty, the last thing you do is shoot him, or it, dead . . .
THE TERMINAL MAN
THANKS A LOT, LADY – YOU JUST KILLED THE ONLY CHANCE WE HAD!
WHY, JIN? WHY – WHEN IT HAD OFFERED TO HELP US?
IT WOULD HELP US – THEN KILL US, I COULD SEE IN ITS MIND, CROSS...
IT WAS A DARK PLACE – HIDEOUS!
MANDRELL HAD WANDERED OFF IN DISGUST, AND, AS HE CLEARED A SMALL RIDGE...
CROSS! JIN! COME HERE, QUICK!
A WIDE PLAIN STRETCHED AWAY BEFORE THEM, COMPLETELY FLAT, COLOURLESS IT GLEAMED DULLY INTO THE FAR HORIZON...
IS THIS WHAT WE'VE COME TO FIND?
IT IS – THE SOURCE OF RADIATION COMES FROM ITS CENTRE, THE SHIP FUEL CELLS WHICH WE WANT ARE THERE SOMEWHERE...
BUT WHERE? HOW? IT'S JUST A FLAT NOTHINGNESS.
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT – COME ON, LET'S GET DOWN TO IT...


FASCINATING — SEEMS TO BE MADE FROM SUPERDENSE MOLECULES WITH VARIABLE MASS. BUT WHY...?
CROSS! IT'S MOVING...!
OF COURSE! IT'S A TRANSPORT SYSTEM — MOST ADVANCED I'VE EVER SEEN...
WILL YOU STOP ADMIRING IT AND —
— TELL US WHAT WE DO!
WE GET ON AND SEE WHERE IT WANTS TO TAKE US — COME ON!
THE MASS IS POLARISED, FOCUSSED,
THE MATERIAL ACTS LIKE A SOLID IN ONE DIRECTION, SO WE CAN STAND ON IT —
— AND LIKE A LIQUID IN ANOTHER DIRECTION, SO IT CAN FLOW LIKE THE WATER OF A RIVER.
MOVING EVER FASTER, THEY WERE WHISKED OUT TO THE CENTRE OF THE PLAIN...
MY GOD! WHIRLPOOL!!
WE'RE GOING TO DIE!
CALM DOWN, MANDRELL—
— IT ADJUSTS ITS GRAVITY AS IT ENTERS THE VORTEX —
I DON'T BELIEVE ANY OF IT —
— JUST TELL ME WHEN IT'S OVER.
STORY BY KELVIN GOSNELL©
DRAWN BY OLIVER FREY©


SOON THE VORTEX STRAIGHTENED OUT AND DELIVERED THEM TO A WIDE SPACIOUS HALL...
WHAT IS THIS PLACE, CROSS? WHO BUILT IT?
YEAH, AND SINCE THEY LEFT THE LIGHT ON ARE THEY STILL HERE?
MY GUESS IS THAT THIS IS A PORT, PROBABLY THE ONE THEY USED WHEN THEY DESERTED THE SYSTEM... IT ONLY HAS A 'WAY IN' FOR PASSENGERS —
NO 'WAY OUT'.
— AS THESE INDIVIDUALS DISCOVERED WHEN THEY CAME DOWN...
AND JUST HOW ARE WE TO GET OUT, CROSS?
FIRST WE FIND OUR FUEL CELLS — THEN WE THINK ABOUT IT. COME ON!
THE SEARCH LED THEM DOWN ONE OF THE SMALLER SIDE PASSAGES. THE LIGHTING HAD FAILED HERE...
CROSS, I DON'T LIKE THIS...
NOR I —
— I SENSE SOMETHING ALIVE HERE —
AIEEEE!!


KEEP VERY VERY STILL!
TAKING VERY CAREFUL AIM, CROSS BROUGHT UP HIS BOW AND—
EEEUGH!
MORE OF THEM. HACK YOUR WAY THROUGH!
HOLD THEM OFF — I MUST CRACK THE CODE ON THIS DOOR!
CROSS WAS A STRANGE HYBRID — PART MAN, PART COMPUTER, PART SOMETHING ELSE. —
THE COMPUTER PART OF HIM CONNECTED DIRECTLY TO THE DOOR MECHANISM
HURRY CROSS! CAN'T HOLD 'EM MUCH LONGER!
SECURITY CODE IS BASED ON A DIFFERENT TYPE OF MATHS — TRIED BINARY. TRIED PRIME NUMBERS...
IT'S NOTHING I CAN UNDERSTAND!
I CAN'T OPEN THIS DOOR!
What now, Cross?



AND THEY CALL THEMSELVES ADULTS!!!

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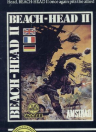
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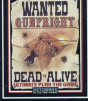
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